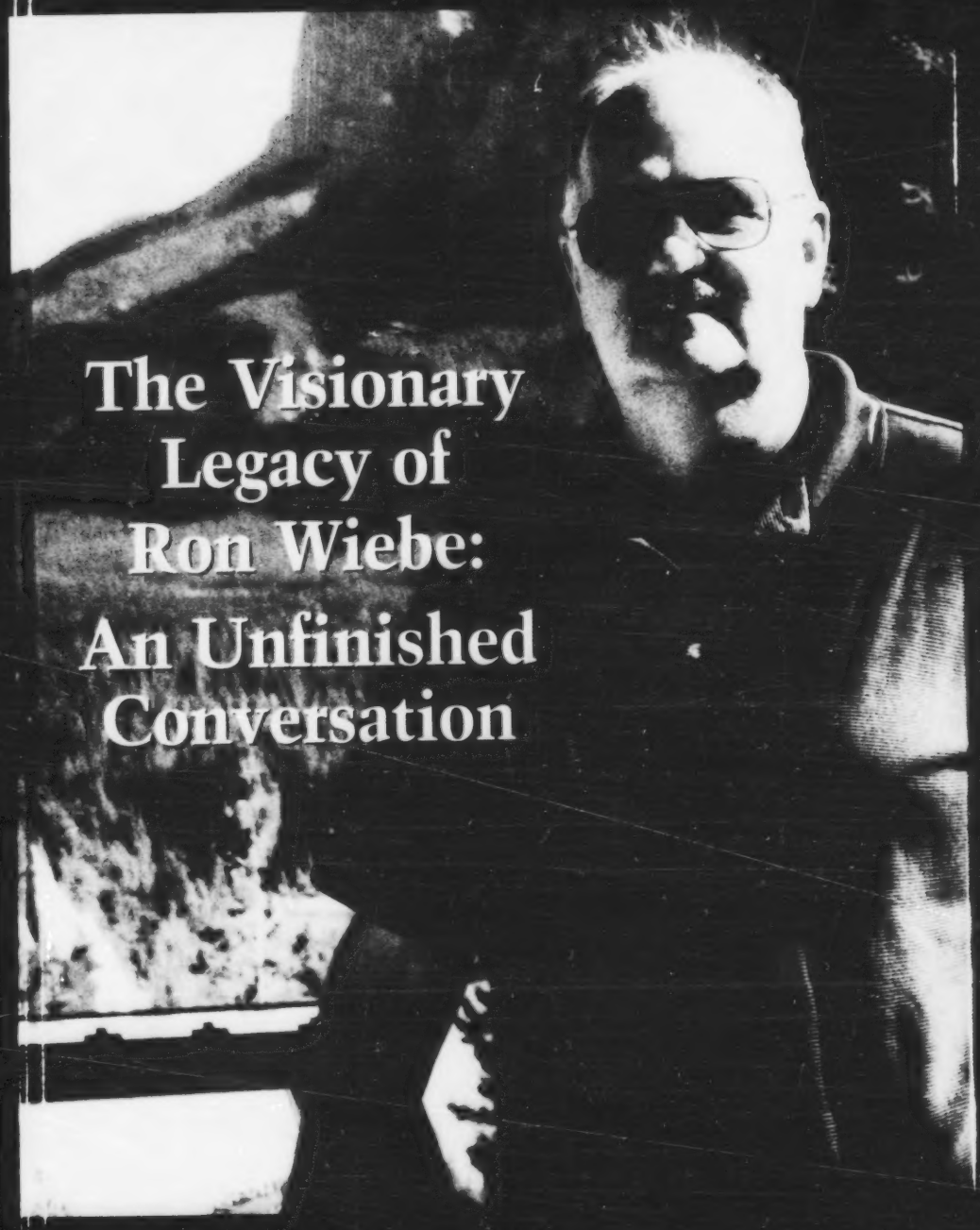
REFLECTIONS OF A CANADIAN PRISON WARDEN



The Visionary Legacy of Ron Wiebe: An Unfinished Conversation

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Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce readers to Ron Wiebe, who was my friend as well as an extraordinary correctional professional.

Ron Wiebe was a memorable man. He knew where he was going and was not afraid to boldly experiment with new methods in order to realize his goals. His struggle to improve his profession was driven not by a desire for personal attention, but always with the goal of improving the contribution of corrections to public safety.

Ron's curiosity, intelligence and practical approach to correctional management were coupled with a decisive and energetic personality. As a result, when Ron was around, things happened. He became a role model for many of us. His moral authority made him a natural leader in his field. In particular, Ron's interests lead him to become closely identified with restorative justice and Aboriginal corrections.

The following pages reflect Ron's wish to leave us with some observations and thoughts that would survive him. He worked hard to share his ideas with us despite the draining effects of his illness. For Ron, there was no question of giving up or ceasing to reflect. My last conversation with him at his bedside the day before his death centred primarily on the future of Aboriginal corrections in our country. He was concerned that CSC's interest in the area would fade over time.

Read his thoughts and use them for inspiration — the greatest way that we can honour Ron's memory is by keeping his dreams alive.

Ole Ingstrup
Commissioner,
Correctional Service of Canada
1988 to 1992 and 1996 to 2000

Acknowledgements

When Ron Wiebe was informed that he had terminal cancer, he decided to record his thoughts about the Canadian correctional system in order to share his knowledge and vision before his death. George Garrett, a former radio reporter, agreed to help Ron by recording and transcribing a series of conversations between March and July 1999. These conversations were generously provided to the Correctional Service of Canada by John Konrad, of Konrad Consulting Services Inc. The work of editing the transcripts into a manuscript was done by Bruce Nesbitt, of Jordan, Nesbitt and Associates Ltd.

The Correctional Service of Canada is grateful to all of these individuals — and especially Ron's family — for allowing us to commemorate his legacy in this book.

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Chapter one

Three Eras in Recent Canadian Corrections

I have had the chance to work in an era when dramatic change has occurred generally in Canadian society, in the criminal justice system, and especially in corrections. There has been a profound shift in the way the criminal justice system has evolved: we have gone from an impersonal, inhumane and brutal system to one that is criticized for being too soft and too humanitarian. Whether that is true or not is a subject for discussion; the point is not that the shift happened, but what brought about those changes, whether they are effective, and whether we are going in the right direction.

It was my hope that at some time I could sit down and do a little more analysis and research just for people who are working in this field in the future — to pass on part of the corporate memory of the Canadian Penitentiary Service, officially renamed the Correctional Service of Canada in 1986. During my 26 years in corrections, the volume of research in forensic and criminal justice issues has been prolific, but it has been so specialized and compartmentalized that it is difficult to integrate, and to figure out what it all means. We have to step back and ask how it fits together.

I am not an historian, but I wish I had the energy and time to search out what happened in the 1960s in the Public Service of Canada that changed how we delivered programs and how we carried out the mandate of the public service. It seemed to be a time when there was much more emphasis on professionalizing the public service, and on moving away from the quasi-military model that was typical of the public service until then.

In corrections it was probably more striking, because the Canadian Penitentiary Service was an organization that was historically impersonal, fairly brutish and antiquated. It did not really

reflect the kind of public service that we would now expect: it was a quasi-military organization. The employees by and large were ex-military, particularly men who had come back from either of the Great Wars. Their experience had much to do with how the Service was organized and how it functioned.

With inmates you are dealing with the lowest of the low in society, I suppose, and that was the way staff dealt with them in the early years. Inmates didn't get there by accident. I'm not one of those people who forget about the terrible harm they have committed, and their victims. Guards suffered a bit. They were tough. They were not well paid, and not well respected. There was a hierarchy, and a code of silence by which guards covered for each other. I don't think that there was much interest in the concept of corrections.

It was punitive, and although there were little bits and pieces of what we would consider programming, certainly it didn't have any real emphasis in the work. I have the last strap that was ever used at the British Columbia Penitentiary (it is now in the B.C. Pen archives). I had the job of project manager for closing the place down, and I talked to many people who were victims of the strap and other harsh treatment. What people forget is that it didn't reduce the rate of crime particularly. It was an era of riots and hostage-takings — a riot a week somewhere in the system was not unusual. Very strange behaviour was the norm.

The innovation era: 1966-1974

With the professionalization of the public service in the early 1960s, the Penitentiary Service hired a group of individuals whose job it was to change the face of corrections. It's important to recognize who these people were. In British Columbia it was Selwyn Roxborough-Smith, who took on B.C. Corrections in 1962 and developed one of the most well-organized provincial correctional services in Canada in that era. It was ahead of its time. Federally, the most significant person was probably Commissioner Allan MacLeod. He was a pivotal person who had more impact on the future of where corrections went than anybody, although I don't think at the time anybody recognized that.

Commissioner MacLeod was moving into an era that was not going to receive new corrections ideas easily, so he hired a number of people who were very well educated, such as Edgar Epp, John Braithwaite, John Maloney, Jim Murphy and Art Trono. These men who came in the early 1960s had an incredible job in front of them — to turn the Penitentiary Service into a proper public service — and they were incredible people. They had a very hard time because they were dealing with a brutish system. They were trying to bring about change in a paramilitary, hostile, undisciplined system and trying to introduce a whole new set of values. Their backgrounds were generally in the social sciences, and the system had absolutely no respect for that. They had to be particularly tough because they were trying to change an organization that was resistant to change. They had to use whatever skill and knowledge and every bit of diplomatic ability that they had.

Art Trono was one of the leaders in this era — my good friend and former boss. I was speaking to him the other day about his experiences, and he said: "You know, there were some things so awful you shut your eyes to it, and you went on with what you could do, and if you did too much you wouldn't have the opportunity to do anything." It took wisdom for these people to figure out exactly how they were going to do this. I think the way they did it was by gradually hiring the next wave of professionals and administrators to come in and bring about change. That was probably their most significant impact: that they were able to surround themselves with other people who had some skill and ability.

By 1966, change was starting to happen. I consider this an era of change, because that's when the first new institutions were built in Canada, looking considerably different from the old fortresses that had existed until then — new places like Drumheller in Alberta, Matsqui Institution in B.C., Springhill in Nova Scotia, Warkworth in Ontario, and some in Quebec. Somewhat smaller than the previous institutions, they were designed to be able to do correctional programming, given the knowledge of that time, and actually to change how we ordered ourselves. I know by today's standards it was probably not a huge move, but they were significant at the time.

Matsqui Institution was even more significant because it was

designed initially as a heroin treatment centre. For the first time it was recognized that we needed to develop a way to deal with addiction as a health-care issue, as opposed to a criminal issue. The program was set up, and eventually it was considered to be flawed. It didn't have the kind of success that many dreamed that it might have, and it folded. Our initial thought that we would be able to develop some magic solution to addiction evaporated. Basically we are no farther ahead today on that score that we were in those days. We're still essentially dealing with a medical–social problem as a criminal problem. It's only in the recent past that law enforcement and policy makers began taking a serious look at whether this is the most appropriate way of dealing with a tricky social problem. When it comes to the consequences of all the criminal behaviour that lies around it, one wonders if there are not better ways of managing it. At least there was some idea that there was a better way, and although it failed it probably gave us some indication of what would work and what wouldn't.

I call the late 1960s and early 1970s *the innovation era*, and it ran until about 1974. What was unique about it is that there were many new programs introduced, and there was a guru, I'm sure, for every ten people out there who had a better idea of how to deal with behaviour. There was a plethora of programming ideas: sensitivity training, T-groups and all the different things that came out of the '60s. Essentially there was a huge variety of programming going on in that 1966 to 1974 era. It was unfocussed, it wasn't based on any particular model, and it was random. Whoever had the best idea this week got the best air time. It made for interesting times.

For a young professional at the time, it was very interesting. I recall people like David Berner (who is now a journalist) with a group called X-Kalay, one of the models that came out of that era in an attempt to deal with cured addicts, and to try different techniques, some with greater or lesser success. Generally there was no corrections theory. There were many theories about criminal behaviour, but there was no comprehensive strategy for how we dealt with criminal behaviour in particular. There was a great deal of research and ideas, but no particular order to it all.

Experimentation with release programs and the temporary

absence programs in those days was very active. We had many men released into the community for a variety of reasons. Some were probably imprudent, and resulted in spectacular incidents in which crimes were committed by offenders while serving their sentences. Tolerance for that is short, so the initiative was slowed down and almost eliminated. Although substantial innovation happened, it didn't really take hold and develop into some kind of comprehensive model until much later.

Policy by inquiry: 1975-1988

The next era emerged in the mid-1970s. It was brought about by the difficulties experienced in prisons at that time: hostage-takings, riots, and all kinds of civil disobedience. The media took a strong position that prisons were ineffective, and that prisoners' rights were being violated. Lobby groups formed around issues related to offender rights, and human rights seemed to be the buzzword of the day. The emphasis had shifted to looking at the system as not being particularly conducive to good corrections. The experience of B.C. Penitentiary with hostage-takings was typical across Canada and certainly across North America. It generated all kinds of diverse responses. On the one hand we were trying to liberalize our policies so that human-rights and prisoner-rights violations were less obvious. On the other hand we were responding with the development of much more sophisticated response teams and security techniques.

In 1977 a Parliamentary subcommittee that looked into prisons tabled its report, known as the MacGuigan Report. It was one of a series of subcommittees that looked into corrections from time to time, but this one seemed to be pivotal. It took a critical view of corrections, particularly how we were organized and how we were not fulfilling the mandate that was expected by the Canadian public. It was very damning in some ways.

That began an era which I call *policy by inquiry*. What we find is that we have become so inquiry-driven that every flaw is now subject to some kind of inquiry, whether it is internal or external. It usually generates some highly specific and focussed direction for

how the Service can improve. Although the specific issues may be relevant and require attention, what often happens is that it gets so single-focussed that it ignores or complicates other things. You never really get a comprehensive approach to the business. You spend all your time chasing down and trying to account for the flaws of one inquiry, and you miss the boat on a number of things.

It is a trend that has continued until very recently. I hope that with different ways of doing business it will slow down, and that we don't have to develop correctional policy by inquiry. We should do it on a more rational basis. But it is pronounced, and it's part of the whole public mindset. It doesn't matter how tough or what position the Commissioner of the day takes; you are going to have to accept that the public demands accountability that it never demanded before. Even in our internal organization the avenues of inquiry are prolific. We inquire on everything, including things that don't seem relevant — but if we think it could possibly have some relevance and is subject to public criticism, we inquire. After every escape, every bit of bad behaviour or every little disturbance that would normally be considered routine practice, we have to have an inquiry, internally or otherwise. It's not that you don't want to know what went wrong, because you do want to learn from your mistakes. It's just the amount of energy it consumes. Fortunately Jim Vantour — who was responsible for all our inquiries and investigations in Ottawa — was a fairly reasonable and competent individual, and he gave some direction that would minimize the downside of this sort of practice. He is a very well respected criminologist in his own right — an academic — and he took the lead for us on the internal inquiry side. But it was, and is, a challenge, and it opened up a whole different way of doing business. The public now expects an inquiry into everything. When an offender dies, even a natural death, we have a coroner's inquest because we cannot allow for any possibility that there was anything improper in the care of the offender. That is one of the legacies.

The other legacy of that era is a much more organizational shift. The emphasis became "what does this organization look like, and how can we restructure it?" In our Service it was particularly marked with the appointment of Don Yeomans as the Commis-

sioner in 1978. His background was that of a business executive and accountant; he was strongly organizational and management-oriented. Although his knowledge of corrections was limited, I developed a fair amount of respect for his work. It took a little while for him to develop an appreciation for this work (as it would anyone), but he did try to professionalize the organization and make it look more like a modern organization. Don Yeomans did a lot of work to restructure the organization to make us much more accountable, better managed and fiscally responsible.

He developed different models for how we structured ourselves, and we went through a number of models. It was our first attempt to bring security in line with the other correctional practices. At that time we were still operating two parallel systems. We had the security side of the business, and we had the separate corrections side, which was designed to try to promote change and do programming. They never got along well, and there were huge problems. A little earlier we had attempted to introduce the living unit model, developed in California. It was a way of trying to integrate correctional operations with the security side. It was implemented in varying degrees across Canada; some places took it on full force and others never got to it at all. It was a bit of dog's breakfast: theoretically it made sense, but in actual practice it didn't work as well as it should have (although it worked in some institutions like Springhill in the Maritimes). As part of his work Don Yeomans shifted into what we now call unit management, which is the current organizational model used across Canada. Even that has gone through a variety of changes, and it's been a long, slow process getting it fully operational. We're pretty well there now: we generally operate within the unit model.

The current era of professionalization: 1988-today

The era we have now moved into I would call that of *professionalization*, in which the organization has become much more professional and organized around corporate models. It begins with the initial appointment of Ole Ingstrup as Commissioner in 1988. He had a vision of a much more organized, professional organiza-

tion based on a clear set of values and principles, and of policies realigned so that they are consistent with our values. After four years as Commissioner, he served for about four years in other government appointments, then returned in 1996. He is an extremely demanding Commissioner, with very high performance expectations. He suffers fools very poorly, and is not a person you can manipulate or sway to drop his agenda.

He has brought an era where research is valued, and where corporate structures are tools that are designed to be effective, as opposed to something slavishly followed. His view of policy is quite different. He got rid of huge chunks of obsolete policy from years ago, redefined our whole policy, refined it and made it much more simple. He brought that kind of businesslike approach to the Service, as did others (I'm focussing on the Commissioner because he is the head of the organization). His emphasis on human rights is extremely strong. It's almost an obsession with him: not just the treatment of offenders but also the treatment of staff, and how we treat each other.

Most important for him is the emphasis on the rule of law. He is absolutely committed to the principle that the organization has to behave lawfully. He is of the opinion that if the law is foolish and can't be followed, we should do something about changing the law. But we can't just arbitrarily decide what laws and what rules we will or will not follow. That has been a source of difficulty for the organization, because organizations don't often follow the law as closely as they ought to. It has even affected the rights of prisoners and our responsibility for dealing with cases on a timely basis. There are rules in the legislation that define when offenders need to be reviewed for parole, yet historically there has been a lot of sloppiness about not encouraging inmates to seek release in a timely way, as required by law. It's a simple thing like that, or about ensuring appropriate access to health-care services and the right to complain. We have an offender grievance system that many of us find to be a pain, but it is still the law. We must ensure offenders access to that system if they feel something has gone wrong.

It's difficult, because you will always find offenders who abuse that — people who for sheer entertainment value will launch a

hundred grievances a day, just to occupy your time, and jailhouse lawyers and people who will pick on frivolous causes and paper you to death, as they say. That's where the challenge is: how do you deal with those? It's not the occasional complaint from an inmate that causes you distress; it's when the abuses show up, yet the law requires us to behave in a particular way. We do make provisions for this now.

We have never experienced the abuse of the legal system that the Americans have. In part it's because we've paid more attention to the human-rights issues, and in part because we have had internal grievance processes in place, whereas many of our American contemporaries did not. They were never able to deal with a lot of the complaints. Much of what we would deal with internally, they would have end up in the federal courts. Texas has probably had more court challenges than any place, so you have the federal courts almost deciding the policy of the Texas Department of Corrections.

We have avoided some of the pitfalls — we do have our share of lawsuits, but in comparison they are relatively small and usually the exceptional cases.

As well as the emphasis on the rule of law, a further shift we are currently experiencing is a much more scientific approach to our programming. We now look very seriously at what the research has to tell us about what works and what doesn't. We have been systematic in implementing programs.

The other shift is in architecture: looking at different models of how we physically house prisoners. It has always bothered me to walk down these long ranges of cellblocks in our traditional prisons in Canada and North America generally, and to see the sterility, human waste and lack of activity. I'm sure the major topic of conversation of these guys is how they are going to score their next drugs or plan their next crime. Architecture is an important issue; it's not frivolous. We keep messing around with some obsolete models, but fortunately we got into structuring our minimum-security prisons across the country with architecture that is much more conducive to promoting change in people, teaching them how to live independently at much less cost than we would in a tradi-

tional prison. It was an idea that our current Commissioner started in 1988. William Head on Vancouver Island was the first of the facilities to go to an independent-living model, which was quite different from the old cellblock traditions that were part of our correctional history. Subsequently, all the minimum-security institutions in Canada have nearly completed their development. It has clearly shown itself to be a superior model for doing everything from promoting security to teaching people how to live independently. It also gives much lower cost housing options, and saves the taxpayer money in the process.

I hope that future development of this model centres on the medium-security institutions. I don't see a huge future for prison construction in the next 10 to 15 years, nor much of an increase in prison population. I am absolutely convinced that we can accommodate many more in minimum security than we have in the past. If there is any expansion, it will be there, and perhaps in refurbishing some of our older institutions. It clearly works at William Head.

We will still need the hard prison. We still have in our system some very dangerous, uncontrolled and behaviourally disordered individuals who are not easily managed and represent a real risk to the community, a risk to escape and a risk for violence wherever they happen to be. Fortunately that group is fairly small — about 20 per cent of our population. Out of our population in this Pacific Region of 1,700, we have about 130 in maximum security at Kent Institution. Others who could fall into that category are a number of individuals at the Regional Psychiatric Centre: mentally disordered patients and those with severe personality and character disorders. They would represent considerable risk if they were anywhere close to the community. The remainder fall somewhere in the middle.

Chapter two

Becoming a Prison Warden

I was born and raised in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Following my graduation from Abbotsford Secondary School, I attended Briercrest Bible College in Saskatchewan for two years, where I met my wife (who is from Minneapolis). I returned to British Columbia, started my undergraduate work at Simon Fraser University, and graduated in 1969 with an Honours degree in English literature.

At that point, I had three options open to me. I had applied to do graduate studies in English, and I had been accepted into several programs. I was also accepted into law school, and into the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia. I'm still not certain why, but I chose to go into social work and graduated in 1971 with a Master's degree.

I already had some involvement with corrections, through two summers' worth of experience working for both the provincial and the federal correctional systems. But with the completion of my MSW, the scholarships that I had at U.B.C. required me to pay back some time in the Northwest Territories. I spent the next two years as a social work supervisor in the Mackenzie Valley area, living in the little village of Fort Simpson. My area of responsibility was the southern Mackenzie Valley, from the B.C. border up to Norman Wells, and all the communities that lie along the river. It was interesting and a great learning experience for me, because I was mainly working with Aboriginal people. I knew nothing about the First Nations' heritage. I was able to learn from some of the old folks and the Elders, and acquire some basic understanding of Aboriginal culture and spirituality. Had I not been there, I don't think that I would have had any opportunity to develop this understanding.

In 1973, when the Canadian Penitentiary Service was opening up the Regional Psychiatric Centre in my old home town of Abbotsford, they contacted me to see if I would be interested in coming as a social worker and setting up the program there. I accepted, and worked at the Psychiatric Centre for eight or nine months before I went on to the National Parole Service, which was a separate agency under the auspices of the National Parole Board. After a competition, I won the job of Assistant Warden, Socialization — responsible for correctional operations — at Matsqui Institution, where I spent approximately four years.

Helping to create the Correctional Service of Canada

In 1977, I had the opportunity to be part of a Task Force that was designed to integrate the Parole Service into the Penitentiary Service, and to create one agency for Canadian federal corrections — a major change. I spent the next year working on that particular project. It was a long, complex organizational initiative because it also involved changing all of the legislation that governed us. Previously we had been governed by two Acts, the *Penitentiary Act* and the *Parole Act*, which were combined into one Act called the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. Being part of the Task Force was a tremendous working experience, and I had a significant hand in everything from policy to organizational studies. Although it's not always a happy event for the people involved, working with my colleagues, I learned a great deal about organizational behaviour.

I remained at Regional Headquarters in Abbotsford for almost ten years in various management jobs. I took on a number of initiatives during that period, including Project Officer involved in closing down the B.C. Penitentiary and opening Kent Institution. It was an intricate project, because we were moving staff and inmates from one institution to another in a co-ordinated and organized way — it wasn't simply moving from one place to the next. We had to make sure that staff were at the other end, trained and ready to go, and still maintain the second institution while it was being shut down. I was engaged in planning for the shutdown of the penitentiary, which for many of us was a symbol of bad corrections. There

are old officers around who saw it as an important part of their life, and I'm sure they would find the criticism harsh, but most of us working in the business saw it as a place that really had no role any more in contemporary society.

I returned to Matsqui Institution in 1987 as Deputy Warden and worked there until about 1994. I briefly spent six months as the Acting Warden of William Head Institution, while they were awaiting the appointment of a Warden, and immediately following that came to Ferndale Institution in 1994 as Warden. It was an interesting facility for me because it was still in development, and it gave me a chance to incorporate several features I had learned over the years: from architecture and policy to program planning and rehabilitation initiatives. It's not very often that people get a chance in their life to develop a model and actually implement it, and I was very fortunate to be given that opportunity.

In the last year, I was also given responsibility for the Elbow Lake Institution, another minimum-security institution. The purpose was to integrate our two minimum-security institutions for more efficient management, and to initiate a project to make Elbow Lake Institution an Aboriginal-focussed facility. It will be geared to Aboriginal offenders, and have its programming and operations based on Aboriginal culture and spirituality. We hope that we will make the conversion to a fully Native-based facility by later this year. The project is well under way, and should meet our goals and expectations. It's a work in progress, and I hope it will continue. It should be a good model for what we can do in using an alternative-culture approach to working with people.

Career opportunities: entrepreneur, investigator and a code of conduct

During the course of my career, I've had several opportunities as a manager in the public service. I was able to complete the executive program at Queen's University in 1991, which was a useful experience for me because my fellow students were mainly private-sector executives. I learned a tremendous amount from that experience, which helped me to be more entrepreneurial in my work,

especially in CORCAN operations (a Special Operating Agency of the Service that provides employment and training opportunities to offenders). It gave me a great deal of insight into how we could make much more effective use of our business side, and I was able to apply the knowledge in the development of Ferndale Institution.

Another opportunity was serving as the first harassment investigator in the Pacific Region. When the government introduced the current harassment policy, it was an attempt to create a more a respectful workplace, and to reduce some of the problems around general harassment and sexual harassment. Harassment could be anything. It could be boss versus employee, with issues about the abuse of power. It could be sexual harassment between people, although that was less and less the case. Generally, it was simply bad behaviour between two co-employees. I had a number of years' experience with that position, which really had nothing to do with my work in corrections. It's just something you do.

I also worked with a small group of seven or eight people in drafting a code of conduct for the Correctional Service of Canada in the early 1990s. We were able to write up our work expectations of our employees, and tie them into a code of discipline that would allow us to make sure that we had control over the professional behaviour of our staff. We called it Standards of Professional Conduct for Employees, with a related Code of Discipline. It was an important piece of work in making the organization much more professional and accountable. The standards and code were adopted in 1993, and continue to be in effect today.

Research and early automation

I feel that I had a little bit to do with the original seeds of promoting research, and certainly with getting it going. The Correctional Service of Canada never really had a research capacity, and didn't encourage it. But in this region, I inherited a leftover from the old days of Matsqui Institution; when it became a medium-security institution and closed its treatment facility for heroin addicts, a small component was left behind. That group wound up reporting to me, and I made an effort to keep the research going

although it was not really part of the organization. Nor was research on treating heroin addicts all that well received. But we thought it was important to look seriously at the knowledge that was coming out of the universities and elsewhere, to try to apply it to our work.

So I maintained a research unit for a number of years, and developed the first research policy, including the ways that proposals could be put forward and managed, particularly by students. Up until then, there were no procedures for graduate students wanting to do a thesis that involved us, for example. We had to develop a code of ethics and other guidelines necessary to do good research. Eventually, research did get its place in the sun, but not until recently. We had one Commissioner who actually objected to research being part of corrections; his tenure with us was very brief and not very distinguished, and fortunately we got back on track. We now have in Canada one of the best research capacities of any correctional organization in the world. It was started initially by Frank Porporino and is currently being handled by Larry Motiuk, a very competent researcher. They have developed a powerful research staff, and their journal, *Forum on Corrections Research*, is highly respected — I think it has had a tremendous impact on corrections around the world.

Another area in which I was able to make a contribution was in encouraging students. I have always tried to contribute by getting students summer jobs in programming or field placements to give them exposure to correctional work. Over the years, I have seen some of these students develop into very competent professionals in their own areas, some of whom are now administrators in their own organizations, and some are academics. I think of people like Steve Hart at Simon Fraser University, a well-respected forensic psychologist who cut his teeth in corrections, working with us as a grad student.

I believe that I inherited the first computer the Correctional Service of Canada ever owned. It was part of the research unit, and of course it was an antiquated piece of equipment — one of the old-fashioned ones with cards. But I had several people in the research unit who were computer-knowledgeable, given the era, and they

kept promoting automation. I may have been the first person in the federal government to have a computerized office. I couldn't swear to that; all I know is that it was illegal to have computers, because in those days computers were considered to be those great big Univac machines. Under the Treasury Board's regulations, there was no provision for buying computers, so we had to find all sorts of creative ways to buy those first word-processing computers for our support staff.

We were about two to three years ahead of the pack in introducing computers at Regional Headquarters here in British Columbia. We actually had most of our office automated long before the rest of the country started to think about it. We prepared our Region for the inevitable: the total domination — almost the tyranny — of automation, and the high-tech influence that drives everything we do.

Setting up a reception assessment process

I had a significant hand in one other area: establishing the reception assessment centre at Matsqui Institution. My experience in working with new offenders coming into the system is that it was rather piecemeal — the kind of assessments that we did were random and uncoordinated. It wasn't that there were not some good assessments, but there was no standard for doing them. Neither was there a standard way of collecting good information: judges' comments, police reports, previous criminal information, case histories, social histories and criminal profiles.

We would make assessments without complete knowledge, and then we would discover information after the fact that would have a tremendous impact on knowing a little more about that offender. A classic case would be dealing with someone convicted of breaking and entering; we would treat him as just a typical break-and-enter artist, only to find that he had a previous history of sexual assault. We would realize that the purpose of his breaking and entering was not just property-related, but may be something much more harmful, involving sexual fantasies. We had a number of similar incidents, and we recognized that we had to be more prudent in how we collected our information.

About 1989, at Matsqui, we put a team together to design and develop a reception assessment process that would deal with every offender in exactly the same way, with access to the same kind of psychological and criminal profile assessments and social histories. The most important part was to ensure that the documentation we collected was complete, and that we were getting our source documents on a timely basis. The reception assessment centre determined where an offender would be placed, what kind of programs he would be put into, and what kind of correctional treatment plan (as we called it in those days) would be applied to him. We did it without any money or additional resources. I simply convinced the staff that it was a good thing, and we reordered our priorities and got the project on the way. It was an opportunity to start a facility that has proved its merit and improved the quality of the work we do in corrections.

Today, it continues in a much more sophisticated way than it did in the early days. It's better funded and organized, we have a competent and well-organized reception assessment centre that serves this region, and now I think it is done in essentially all regions across Canada. When we started, it was a 12-week process, but now they have reduced it to eight weeks. That's partly because of automation and a much quicker response in getting documentation. Every offender who is sentenced goes through the facility at Matsqui Institution. During that eight-week period, the inmate is held in a specific holding unit until he has completed assessment and is sent to the most appropriate facility for him.

The level of documentation in a current file is sophisticated, and the risk-assessment tools that we now apply are equally sophisticated. Using a number of factors, we measure the inmate's potential for violence, potential for risk, areas of criminal thinking and levels of addiction, all with a view to identifying the kinds of initiatives that are appropriate for that individual. There are a number of things that we can do now that we didn't have the capacity to do before. Part of that is based on our research, which gives us a tremendous amount of information about how we can do things better. And we developed actual tools. We use what would be called in the insurance business actuarial risk-assessment tools, which are

documents that will give specific, base-line scores as indicators of the inmate's risk of violence and risk to reoffend in particular areas, for example, or that measure the degree of sexual deviancy. The person's social history enters into it, including everything from family and origin right through to education, employment history (if that exists) and substance-abuse history. We also prepare a criminal profile, which looks at the pattern of criminal behaviour unique to the offender.

In summary, I think I am a bit of risk-taker. Although I am a very conservative person, I have looked at the research and tried to make prudent decisions accordingly. I push the envelope, but my colleagues have always been very supportive.

Chapter three

Trends in Corrections

Several significant trends have emerged over the last 30 years in criminal justice and corrections work— trends that have and will continue to have an impact on this business. The first concerns organization. In today's public service, organizational theory and all its related tenets are a major area of study and concern, as most organizations try to become more competitive and more effective and improve their status in whatever way they can. But this is a relatively new phenomenon. If we look back over the first part of the century through the late 1950s, organizations were fairly stable. They were based on definite hierarchical models where the power structure and the authority structure were clearly defined, and the goals of the organization were simple, whether they were private or public.

Typewriters and the white-collar worker

Beginning in the 1950s, a number of things changed. Probably the most important was the widespread use of the typewriter, which had a significant impact on the structure of how we organize ourselves to conduct business. It seems like a silly thing, but it changed how we collect information and report data, and it brought about the era of forms. Up until then, we recorded our activity in journals. We could standardize the way we did our work to great effect, in a systematic way. It was a boon for the paper manufacturers, but it certainly had an impact on the structure of organizations.

A second feature was the changing nature of the workforce. Once we started moving in the direction of standardizing work, we had a huge cadre of relatively low-paid employees to do clerical sup-

port work, a huge cultural shift. It was a major contributor to bringing women into the workplace. It was subtle, it changed the dynamics, and it also changed the size of the workplace that was not related to actual production. In earlier times, workers were actually producing things or doing specific activities related to the goals and roles of an organization. We now created large administrative bureaucracies of white-collar workers to manage production. It all seemed to come to a head as automation and technology began to take hold, particularly in the 1950s.

For the first time, we saw the study of organization as an important area, particularly in schools of business and in the academic expansion of the social sciences. The issues of how man organizes himself, how business conducts itself and the nature and effectiveness of organizations now became of major interest. Some of the earlier academics like Warren Bennis and Peter Drucker led the way — and continue to lead the way even today — in analysing the structure of human organizations, especially the organization of private and public bureaucracies.

The shift from authority to power

Corrections was part of the first dynamic shift, although — probably because of the nature of our work — we were much slower in moving than other parts of our society. In the 1970s and 1980s, we got caught up in it with great speed, and the criminal justice system was by then clearly part of the process. The way we ordered ourselves and the way we conducted business changed fairly dramatically.

Basically, what happened is that organizations shifted from an authority model to a power model. By "authority model" I mean an organization that defines who had control and who had the authority to do what. People acted within those authorities without much regard to the impact of their decisions or concern with the influence they would have. But as we generated much more complex organizations, the authority model simply became ineffective, and we moved to a power model. What I mean by "power" is the ability to influence. In the management of organizations, there has been

an increasing disrespect for or lack of interest in authority as a way of changing, organizing, shifting and motivating behaviour towards meeting organizational goals. The goal now is to develop the credibility and accountability by which you are able to influence changes in the organization.

One of the by-products is the current interest in the whole subject of leadership. It has become a very significant part of business-school training, and it's certainly part of most management and professional-school training these days. It's the ability to lead using influence, as opposed to authority. The process of changing its forms of management and leadership was difficult for the criminal-justice system, because it was such a strongly entrenched authority model.

Managing competing interests

A second shift was the need to manage competing interests: to move away from a single-focus objective to managing a whole complexity of interests, often competing in nature, and trying to bring balance and resolve conflicts. As our organizations became more complex, they no longer had some simple little goal for which they were responsible, such as producing electric shavers or incarcerating offenders.

In the old models under the authority structure, conflicts were usually generated by persons who resisted the authority, for whatever reason. You had to use all kinds of disciplinary measures to ensure that people adhered to authority. Now, the skill is to manage conflict in a way that people can actually get together, agree and bring things to a middle ground. Of course, this involves a wholly different set of skills. It was often difficult for managers who had their training in the 1930s and 1940s to adapt to the new models. It is a significant trend, and it is increasing at an exponential rate. Young people coming into the workforce rarely have regard for anything authoritarian. They have been trained that way; the school system has reshaped their thinking to be able to cope with modern and postmodern society. Your credibility is based only on your competence as a person to address these issues.

From tactics to strategy

A third trend is the shift from tactics to strategy. In some organizations, managers are more interested in tactical solutions: "How do I improve my product and service delivery? How do I improve the way my organization runs, in very specific terms?" In complex organizations with competing interests, the shift becomes much more strategic: trying to think of game-plan strategies, future thinking, and looking at the economic and demographic environment we're living in to see what it is we should be doing, and how we should be shaping the broad principles of our organizations. It is hard to operate tactically, because the rules we are assuming on one day are changed in months or even weeks, and the tactics we thought to be so appropriate at that moment are no longer appropriate.

From process to productivity

A fourth change is the increasing move from process to productivity and bottom-line thinking. Historically, organizations were much more interested in making sure that things ran smoothly and were well-ordered, and the processes were well in place. If you had good processes, the organization could ramble on forever. That doesn't happen any more. Every organization has to pay attention to its productivity and delivering the goods on time, and to being marketed well and presented in a way that will keep the organization alive. One mistake in its strategy could bring a large organization to ruin.

From stability to change

Another shift is the whole move away from organizations existing to promote equilibrium and stability to facilitating change. That's a dramatically different way of viewing the world, and it changes the way we structure ourselves, the way we set our goals, the way we organize and manage, and the way we work with unions. Management change is still the most difficult aspect of working in any large organization: all the different variables with

which we are confronted in a high-tech, multimedia, high-speed environment, including a demanding public.

Corporate culture

The shift towards developing corporate attitudes, values and cultures has become increasingly important. People working in an organization are not necessarily committed to the values and goals of that organization. Training and orientation are often much more focussed on enhancing the corporate culture of the organization than on developing specific skills. Specific requirements change, and may not have a long-term benefit. Any good organization now has a very clear mission statement, principles and values that management hopes will guide the organization, rather than relying on the hierarchy to enforce them.

Parts of the traditional organization no longer work. Many of our traditional personnel practices, how we staff people and how we compensate them are areas that need review, because our models were designed in the 1950s for quite a different organization. As we try to work in a high-speed world, our current ways of hiring and staffing have become problematic, particularly in a government bureaucracy that is committed to strong principles about merit, and ensuring that fairness and the rights of workers are well protected.

We are always struggling with antiquated parts of our organization when we are dealing with environments that are different. We have seen it recently as we negotiate collective agreements with our employee organizations. It's hard to negotiate competing values. Looking at a specific example in corrections, we are not necessarily able to do effective correctional work based on the regular clock. Programs may well be more effective if they are offered to offenders in the off hours or in the evening, allowing offenders to carry on during normal days and work assignments like everybody else.

In their wish to protect employees and their working lives, however, the unions concern themselves with working conditions. They are obviously not all that thrilled with having people working strange hours, and having their family and social lives disrupted because of the requirements of the workplace. It's a major concern

and a legitimate concern.

There are many studies about the impact of shift work on employees, stress in the workplace, and the importance of creating a workplace that reduces the amount of anxiety that employees face. It's very clear that employee organizations such as unions have every right to want to ensure that the employees' side of the equation is properly addressed. Very quickly there is conflict. This may be a simple example, but it points out some of the dynamics of facing a new economy and a new organizational world and trying to keep all these things in balance. I suspect that this is not going to be the end of the line. There will be continuing debate and mutual discussion on how we resolve a competing interest between the effective delivery of a program and ensuring that employee rights and working conditions are secure and well maintained.

Re-engineering

A further trend is the emergence of re-engineering. It started in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the private sector, and caught on in the public sector much later — interestingly, about the time the private sector was abandoning it. Re-engineering came about at a time when it was clear that old organizational structures were simply not being effective and companies would have to look at new ways to conduct business.

The idea behind re-engineering is to examine work, and restructure it in different models and different ways. The classic job description was of little merit, because as soon as a description was formulated it was by definition obsolete the next day. It became difficult to describe in traditional ways the duties and functions that we might have had under stable bureaucracies. Now, the emphasis had to be much more on describing the skill sets and the knowledge that we want people to bring to the workplace. How they use their skills may go through a number of changes. Although we still are beholden to job descriptions to help determine the pay level and the value of a particular job, it is nevertheless problematic because the chances of the person ever meeting the full requirements for that job description a year later are often remote. I call it the tyranny of

job description, which means that you are locked into doing work in a particular way without allowance for flexibility or adjustment to changing forces. It's just one example of the difficulties you face in a changing organizational environment.

The term "re-engineering" has fallen into disfavour because it became another word for downsizing. Although the original re-engineering was never conceived as a process to eliminate jobs, it quickly came to be viewed as that. For many middle managers, in particular, it became a way of kicking someone out of the organization. It has caused a number of concerns in some large organizations because the net result was a number of people losing their jobs or being forced into early retirement. In many cases, it actually threw organizations into mayhem, because in doing what they thought was a good thing and becoming much more bottom-line-oriented and efficient in their structures, they lost their corporate memories. Case studies in the *Harvard Business Review* and other journals document how companies actually did themselves enormous damage by being too enthusiastic about using re-engineering, and losing chunks of the organization that they didn't think were of merit at the time.

One of the strongest interests now is leadership, and how you get an organization to rethink itself and to use its existing talents to adjust and restructure itself continuously, without necessarily threatening the livelihoods of the employees.

New views of corrections: the living unit model

We need a new view of corrections, because we are really a service to the community. We should be part of a whole continuum of community organizations that address issues of public safety and social control. We're dealing with the worst-case scenarios, the hardest cases our society has produced, but nevertheless true intervention and true corrections can happen within the context of community participation and involvement. It should be a priority for us to maintain our contacts and to develop strong ties with the community in everything we do. That includes our business relationships, which I found extremely helpful in developing our industrial

programs and working with the private sector. They bring to us knowledge of the business community and things that we as bureaucrats are not good at. In return, we bring to them knowledge about behaviour and some of the issues about social control. Often, people think that somehow we manufacture criminals and release them on an unsuspecting public. That is not what happens.

Something happened in the late 1960s that changed the organization. Part of it had to do with some of the organizational issues I have just discussed. It was clear that we were no longer a solitary, insulated, punitive arm of the government of Canada. Now, we were a full-blown department that was expected to perform as the Canadian public wanted us to perform, and holding us much more to account than we may have been accustomed to. The early leaders who were hired to bring about this change were visionaries, struggling with the question of how to bring about the kind of shift in the organization that was inevitable, but needed careful thought. Their initial efforts were to address the old security-custody model that formed the basis of corrections, and to introduce more programming ideas that actually focussed on the corrections aspect of our work.

The most significant accomplishment in this early innovation period was the introduction of the living unit model in the federal system. Similar variations were introduced in provincial correctional organizations. The living unit model was an attempt to bring in a staff with a much broader set of skills in working with people, in addition to their normal custodial duties. They were there to help offenders to change. The only problem at the time was that there were no resources for the programs that existed. We were still in the era of numerous theories, ideas, wild dreams and schemes by people who thought that they may have some idea of how to contribute. We were overly tolerant in allowing some of the initiatives to go forward, without having any clear sense of their downstream impact. The research capacity we needed just did not exist. At the same time the living unit model was transitory, because we were still holding on to the security model.

It was a two-part organization. One part was committed to ensuring a high level of security and control to prevent inmates from escaping or engaging in illegal activities while in prison. Another

part of the organization was trying to be more effective in working with people, and less concerned with the security dimensions of the work. So it was a somewhat clumsy model, although its intentions were great in that it brought into the organization a different kind of thinking and a different kind of employee. It was fraught with difficulties right from the beginning. Over the next six or seven years of operation, that model did go some way toward changing the face of the organization. But it wasn't able to integrate everything as it should have done.

The unit management model

The unit management model was established to try to achieve those results. It was the model we currently operate by, although it has undergone a number of changes since. The unit management model restructured the whole organization so that we are all committed to common goals and responsibilities, whether case worker, parole officer, corrections officer, or health-care worker. It also broke the organization down into smaller teams and workers.

The shift came under the Commissionership of Don Yeomans. He began to recognize that the change had to impact the whole organization. We were still having a number of problems, such as releasing inmates who were a risk to the community, and there were still problems inside the management of our facilities. It was clear that we needed a much more integrated approach.

We had learned that big, monolithic structures don't work. We become much more effective when we can delegate as much responsibility and power to the lowest level of the organization. This was a step in the right direction: to try to build smaller work teams that had clear areas of responsibility cutting across professions, so that it wasn't just a single group of people involved. Our case-management and unit teams consisted of a good cross-section of people.

Like everything else, it's a work in progress. We've worked with the unit management model now for close to 15 years, and it's starting to look different than in the beginning. That's the nature of the work. It allowed us to think about ordering ourselves into much

smaller, more effective work teams and enhanced the whole concept of teamwork. There is still a long way to go. We are debating the division of responsibilities, and who does what. As we speak, a number of projects are under way to look at our processes and procedures within that model to make them more effective, and to deal with the expectations of the public, the government and the organization itself. It is a model that works.

The postmodern organization

Another organizational shift goes back to our fairly recent encounter with the whole re-engineering process. As recently as three or four years ago, we started to look very seriously at a number of things we did, and asked whether there are better ways of doing them. Did the traditional departments that we had structured to carry out certain functions still work? Who do these organizations report to, and is there value in centralizing some functions and decentralizing others? Most of it had to do with common functions. For example, an organization like ours is regionally based, managed by a particular group. Is there something we can do as managers of this regional group to look at the way we do business? Are the ways we handle regional food services and manage the organization's technology better served by more centralized ways, and through teams that work for all of us, rather than each of us having our own little empires?

We undertook a number of initiatives to see if there were ways that we could become more efficient in how we manage our affairs. Some things worked and some didn't. Some of our re-engineering initiatives fell flat on their face, and it became clear that they were just not as effective as we thought. On the other hand, certain initiatives worked much better than expected, and actually improved the quality of service that we were able to achieve.

In other words, we have evolved into a postmodern organization. There is less concern with changing the organization every time we get a new goal or the circumstances external to us change. There is probably more willingness to work with the existing organization: to adapt and adjust in a way that avoids the trauma of

the huge organizational changes we've experienced in the last 20 years. We have realized that in postmodern organizations we have to be a learning organization: that we can build on our experiences and continue to adjust and improve. We have to be able to try things and not feel that it's the end of our lives if we don't continue following them slavishly.

We now focus much more on having some clear understanding of what we mean when we say that we are productive. What is it that we do and how do we make sure we are accountable to the public and to others? We spend a large amount of effort defining what we should be accomplishing, and what would look like quality service to the Canadian public. Our primary goal is public safety and the reduction of crime. At the same time, the way we accomplish it must be consistent with the overall goals of government for treating people with respect and dignity all the way through the process. That means everyone: employees, the public and offenders as well.

There has probably been some confusion along the way as to whom we serve. We often refer to the clients as the offenders. That's never been quite my view. In my view, the clients are those who pay. That's an important concept, because it gives us a better focus on where our priorities should be. In this case, it's clearly my view that the clients are the taxpayers. We serve them. That has been a focus I've tried to attach to our work. When we set our priorities and goals and targets, it is ultimately the taxpayer who is the beneficiary of our work. Not only do we want to do our work effectively in terms of changing peoples' behaviour, we also want to do it in a cost-effective way. We want to do it in a way that is less — rather than more — burdensome to the public, and in a way that is clearly understood by the public. We are trying to provide better public accountability.

The future organizational directions are not entirely clear. We are still going to see models that will allow us to rethink public policy, and probably move toward models that are more decentralized on one side, but more centralized on the other. I know that those things sound competing. The structure of prisons as we have historically known them are going to continue to change, more slowly than

other parts of society, but we are going to have to look at models now that are more easily managed and led given the complexities of change. We are going to be a much more value-driven and principle-driven organization. The various correctional facilities or parole units will be much more accountable for how they are going to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Chapter four

Security Technology

The second trend that we are witnessing, somewhat related to the shift in organization, is what I would call the shift in architecture and security technology. In other words, what do our correctional facilities look like? There is a huge divergence in correctional facilities in Canada, North America and around the world. We still have in operation many of the old traditional prisons. Simultaneously, we have a number of very contemporary, innovative and newer models of operating. It makes for confusion among the public, because it doesn't look as if it's a cohesive organization when you have so many different bits and pieces to it.

In Canada, in the past 30 years, we have moved away from the classic prison, which was the traditional model of cellblocks that were designed for the easy management of people — so that you could order them, march them in line and get them into their cells with the least amount of difficulty and provide a level of security with the fewest number of personnel. They were not designed at all to accommodate human change, or to address a number of the criminal behaviours that these people brought into prison with them. We are more concerned about efficient incarceration. A whole generation of facilities exists — or did exist — which were probably efficient in the incarceration part of their work but certainly contributed little to anything else.

The changes started in the late 1960s, with the construction in Canada of a number of new institutions across the country. They included Matsqui in British Columbia, Drumheller in Alberta, Cowansville in Quebec, and Springhill in Nova Scotia. They were designed to be much more accommodating of contemporary corrections and corrections programming, but they still followed a

cellblock model where a large number of offenders were housed in groups and managed in a rather consistent routine. While this was happening, some of the older facilities like B.C. Penitentiary and Laval in Quebec were actually shut down. They were symbols of the old era of corrections. That first generation of new institutions — which is still in operation — didn't anticipate the direction of the organization down the road, and particularly the move to different models. Nor did it anticipate some of the values and principles that were to become part of us in the future. So we continually have to readjust those facilities.

At the same time, security technology has become incredibly sophisticated. The perimeter detection systems that are now in place have all but eliminated escapes from our institutions, a striking change from the days when people were able to figure out ways of getting out of the old Bastilles. The current technologies that we employ, including closed-circuit television monitors, infrared and other security components, have dramatically improved our ability to control people. We can observe and contain in ways that we were unable to do before. It has had a positive impact, reducing a large number of the incidents that we have historically experienced. It has helped to reduce the level of violence in institutions, although there is still a long way for us to go in terms of good management.

Our current experience is to move much more in the direction of modularizing prisons, so that we don't have large numbers of people who are entrenched in criminal thinking locked up together, reinforcing each other's bad ideas. Clearly, that is one of the ideas that lies behind the development and construction of our new medium-security institutions. We have broken up the facilities into very small modules, which allows for better control. It breaks up the gang mentality that is part of traditional corrections, and makes it much more effective for staff and inmates to interact in order to create an environment that is less prone to criminal thinking and behaviour.

Contraband control and drugs

A major concern in corrections management, probably the one that occupies more of our time than anything else, is contraband

control and the management of drugs. Most of our offenders commit offences because substance abuse is a factor. Depending on that factor, their risk to the public has much to do with their addiction. For us to be effective in our work, our priority must be to manage their addiction and the introduction of drugs into institutions, which is a historical and chronic problem. It is the major security issue we face, and there is no simple answer.

We know that 80 per cent of our offenders either abuse substances or are in prison because of substance-abuse-related crime. Our primary problem is not only the interdiction of drugs, but also how we work with people to reduce their need and dependence on drugs. There has clearly been an effort to improve our interdiction technology. We have high-tech electronic drug detection as well as drug-sniffing dogs, but they will never eliminate the introduction of drugs. As sophisticated as our technology gets, it seems that offenders have the ability to figure out counter-strategies and other ways of gaining access to drugs.

It's a continuing concern when you are trying to balance the invasiveness of high technology within the expectations of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. For example, when visitors come in and we know that there is a possibility that they are importing drugs into the institution, we must be very careful. You can accuse somebody of importing drugs, but the consequences of what they do are severe. It's not only that drugs create physical and psychological problems for the people who are using them. They are also the source of almost all the major violence and conflict in prison. You don't want to treat the issue lightly, but it's one of the great paradoxical issues that we've had to deal with. How do we manage it in such a way that it is effective? The public sometimes holds us to ridicule and asks why we can't just stop it. The truth is that as long as there is public access to prisons, the ability to stop it 100 per cent is just not there.

We have the authority to conduct searches of visitors and others whom we have good and probable grounds to believe are transporting contraband. How we choose to use that authority is open to debate. We have searched people in the past, including strip searches, and we have been subject to a number of lawsuits testing the

law on that matter. The decisions have confirmed our authority and ability to conduct searches. They have questioned our procedures, and whether the actual practice is in compliance with the law. In some cases, it was found we were not. We had to improve, and ensure the rights of everybody involved much more carefully.

It is demeaning, especially for women who have been coerced into transporting contraband. Often, they are the true victims, feeling that they have no choice but to involve themselves in this activity on behalf of their relatives, spouses or boyfriends. Even parents and infants are being used for transporting drugs. It's demeaning to everybody, and it's very difficult to try to manage in a dignified and appropriate way. I don't have too many answers. I think you do whatever you have to do to enforce interdiction. My inclination personally is to move away from searching people, and instead deny them access on probable and reasonable grounds. I think that's the trend we're moving toward. If we have very strong beliefs that people are involved in major drug transport, we should contact the police who would then take over any investigation of the matter. We still do some interdiction where it is obvious to us that someone is in violation of the law, and occasionally we will do searches. But our inclination is to move away from that and involve the police because it is now criminal behaviour, and it is much more a police matter.

It is hard to know for sure whether staff are involved in this behaviour. Over the years, we have discovered a number of employees who have become trapped and involved in the process. It's less now than would have happened previously. Over the years, we have learned a lot about the kinds of scenarios that put employees at risk for this behaviour. Our training strategies for our officers and staff have improved, and really focus on the potential risk that they represent. That means for all staff: not just correctional staff but contractors and others who work with us, so that they have a clear picture of the various scenarios they might encounter and learn ways of avoiding those kinds of situations. It's not always 100 per cent successful; there are situations that arise. In our experience, that kind of behaviour has diminished substantially over the years, so that staff as a source of contraband is a much smaller part of the

problem than it might have been a few years ago. Our own internal intelligence works very strongly to prevent that sort of thing from happening.

Security technology and substance abuse programs

The down-the-road solution is to have a much better understanding of our offenders individually, particularly those involved with drugs. We have to understand the nature of their specific drug involvement and their drug-use patterns, and to develop some good knowledge about them as individuals. Once you know them, observing and managing their behaviour becomes much easier. One of the techniques we have learned, particularly at Ferndale, is to use intensive supervision. We target those individuals who at any given time are having a great deal of difficulty with their drug problems. We hold them under close observation, and work with them intensely so that their opportunities and their interest in that behaviour diminishes. Our ability to observe people in drug-using behaviour is good: everything from watching sleep cycles to their associations. Quite frankly, it doesn't take very much to figure out when somebody is involved with drugs. It seems far more efficient to target those individuals and give them good reasons to quit. If they don't quit, they know that they are going to suffer the consequences, which usually means a higher level of security until they manage their drug behaviour.

The other technique that we use is urine analysis, both random and based on probable and reasonable grounds. It defines very carefully the parameters around which we work, and it allows us proactively to deal with the whole substance abuse issue, both with random testing and as part of an individual's particular program. It helps offenders who are committed to a substance abuse program to stay on the program; one of the requirements is to provide urine for analysis. It's an interesting dimension of security technology, one that is still fairly expensive, cumbersome and slow, but improving. As we gain more experience, the companies with whom we work are going to become much more efficient. It is not foolproof, but it would take so much effort to defeat it that most people don't have

the energy to try. Often, we catch people who are trying to manipulate their samples, and it becomes obvious immediately. It's as close to foolproof as you can get. Occasionally, you get beaten, but normally it's not possible.

There are some deficiencies. For example, it's easy to detect THC from marijuana because it stays in the system for as long as 30 days, whereas products like heroin and cocaine metabolize much more quickly and therefore move through the system much faster. Somebody could have used heroin or cocaine, and 72 hours later, it may not be possible to detect the abuse, whereas we could detect THC. Marijuana is certainly a lesser concern for us than the harder drugs. Offenders often argue that they switch from THC and use the higher drug simply because it's less detectable. I don't know if that's true or not, but it's an argument they give us from time to time. In any case, it is an example of the kind of technology available in corrections that changes the way we do our work.

Systems automation

The other major change in technology is automating all our systems. It has made the management of offender information much more comprehensive and detailed, and allows for analysis that was never imagined before. It's very expensive: it can very quickly run into billions of dollars to develop a system and if you make mistakes along the way, costs are prohibitive. It can be devastating if not managed carefully. The other side is the continuing need to train employees in rapidly changing technology. It drives everybody nuts trying to keep up with where the techies are going; the complaint is that the systems are designed to meet the needs of the technology folks, as opposed to the needs of the ones who are actually doing the work.

All of our offender-related information is documented both in narrative and in quantitative ways. It allows us to identify all blue-eyed, 33-year-old offenders who commit breaking and entries, are cocaine-addicted and are serving sentences of 2.5 years, and where they are, what they are up to and what programs they are involved in. Not only do we have specific documented information on each

offender, we can accumulate huge amounts of quantitative data that allow us to perform previously impossible analyses. It allows us to measure a program's effectiveness: the success that we are having with particular groups of offenders. It's almost mind-boggling. You could find yourself so addicted to the analysis and the manipulation of data that you are unable to get on with the real work. It's a trade-off. As with any modern organization, we have to have a good grip on who we are dealing with, the truth of the nature of the cases we confront, and whether we can't be more precise in categorizing our offenders. That would help us in our strategic planning and our delivery of programs.

Analysis, common sense and intuition

Common sense is always the starting point. I am reminded of a colleague of mine, a great academic and researcher. He has the ability to produce excellent research designs, and comprehensive and meticulous methodologies, but he often comes up with the wrong conclusions. I'm not sure how we define common sense; I think it's the corporate memory of many things that you hold in the back of the mind. It integrates information in a way that is not necessarily ordered and precise, but it's where the wisdom is contained, and suggests the right question about whether something makes sense. If not, why doesn't it make sense?

On the other side, good analysis does affect our wisdom as well. There are a number of things we hold as common truths, which are nothing more than what I would call corporate myths or organizational myths — things that we have come to believe are true and have held as cherished parts of our common sense, but which don't hold up to scrutiny. So I think the gate swings both ways.

Intuition is a very powerful thing. I am absolutely convinced that all the technology in the world will never replace intuition. We have debated this with a number of researchers and others. Why is it that intuitively we know certain things, without detailed analysis? I have had an interest in the field of psychopathy for a number of years, and I know some of the science in that area of research. I know that personally I have a reasonably good intuitive ability to

identify psychopaths, based on brief conversations, whether they are offenders or folks I meet in the community. So I raised the question with my colleague: why is that after his years of experience he did not acquire that intuition? In part, it's the unconscious collection of information about things that you know, integrated at such a high speed that you are not rationally thinking it through. It may be picking up on physiological and behavioural cues that you come to associate with that particular character disorder. After a while, when you see those cues, you are able to make an intuitive judgement quickly. The benefit of science is that it often explains why intuition has worked. It helps to describe some of the behaviours that you have unconsciously become sensitive to, and why.

Intuition is just an accumulation of experience. It is so well-integrated into your brain that it doesn't lend itself to logical analysis. We are much more efficient in our unconscious thinking than we are in our conscious thinking, because in unconscious thinking, we are able to build many variables simultaneously, whereas when we think logically and rationally, we're usually able to deal with very few in an organized kind of way. Intuition is the art of the business, as opposed to the science. The two are not necessarily divorced, but are different sides of the same coin. All correctional practitioners of long standing have come to the conclusion that the art of our work is just as important as the science, but neither can be ignored. Any technology that we embrace has to link with our corporate knowledge, our intuition and the common sense that we bring to the work.

Chapter five

Restorative Justice

One of the disappointments of my current illness is not being able to participate in a committee in Ottawa that will oversee a number of restorative justice initiatives. I have just been appointed, and the current emphasis on restorative justice, which is looking at a whole range of ways of dealing with unacceptable and criminal behaviour, is a move in the right direction for corrections. The committee is starting with various projects to explore ways — other than formal channels and processes — to bring together offenders and those who have been offended against. We would like to see if we can encourage resolution to the situation between them.

Offender–victim reconciliation is only one part of restorative justice, as it has developed over the past few years. We do this with a very select group. In some cases, with many of our criminals, especially drug dealers, it's very hard to define who is actually the victim. It's a diverse group, so other ways of bringing restoration and holding offenders to account for their behaviour must be found.

There are strong indications of interest among governments both in this province and federally to develop restorative justice initiatives. The Attorney General of British Columbia has made several announcements over the past couple of years about various projects that are more consistent with restorative justice principles than the traditional punitive court models. At Ferndale we host an annual conference on restorative justice. Up until now, we have targeted the clergy for this event, but in the last year we have been opening it up to the public, law-enforcement people, judges and others. The field is growing quickly, both in practical projects and as a fast-developing area of academic interest. I am involved in setting up a centre for restorative justice at Simon Fraser University in

the School of Criminology. It will be concerned with both teaching and collecting information, and will make a significant contribution to corrections in Canada and across the province.

I am honoured that the Commissioner has recently announced an annual award — to be named after me — for restorative justice projects in Canada or individuals who develop projects that are deemed to have value and credibility and are models for restorative justice. In my view, this is a very strong step, not just because I am involved, but because it shows a commitment to really pushing the envelope on restorative justice initiatives, and to trying to find more satisfactory ways of holding our offenders to account for their behaviour. One of the shortfalls in programming is that it never really holds anyone to account in a way that says "I'm sorry for what I did." When people can actually express remorse and sorrow for what they did, and more importantly, if they can do it to the affronted, we know that it is often a life-changing experience.

The Betty Osborne case

One of our more satisfactory experiences with restorative justice was the Betty Osborne case in Manitoba, which drew strong public attention because of the victim. The people involved in the murder of that young woman had never been held to account, except for one accessory who had a peripheral part in the incident, and the only one ever convicted. The case attracted national attention through the media and various documentary films pointing out the severe injustice that had taken place: the family had never been properly dealt with as victims. It called attention to our need to be much more sensitive and responsible in such a case. The situation came to a head when the young man was being considered for parole and was then paroled without anyone advising the victim's family. It caused a great deal of concern.

The good news is that it brought about a series of meetings and healing circles which were sponsored by the Native community in Manitoba. Eric Robinson, the MLA for Rupertsland, and Chief Phil Fontaine, then the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, participated in this whole process. It was fascinating to see what

happened. For the offender, it was a life-changing experience. He was able for the first time to describe what happened on that night. Whether any further action will be taken is probably moot at this point, and I don't know whether there is enough evidence to proceed against other individuals. At least, the family has the story and the truth about what happened. This exercise is a model for what we hope the restorative justice initiative can accomplish.

Elbow Lake Institution as an Aboriginal-based facility

In converting Elbow Lake Institution to an Aboriginal-based facility, I wanted to make sure that we designed many of the operations of the facility on restorative justice principles, including discipline and a variety of other traditional correctional practices. We hope to use healing circles wherever there is conflict, as opposed to various disciplinary practices using boards, for example. There are sufficient legal grounds for us to do this, and we certainly have the support of the Correctional Service of Canada. It will give our work a unique flavour. That was one of the reasons I was so keenly interested in converting Elbow Lake into an Aboriginal facility. It will allow us to do so some things that traditionally we have not been able to practice, such as giving the Elders a more prominent role in dealing with the actual day-to-day behaviour of the individual. They are employees; we hire Native Elders on contract much as we would hire Chaplains or counsellors. Their job is to manage not only the spirituality programming, but also the teaching of cultural matters. Both are important to set in practice a number of Aboriginal traditional ways of resolving disputes.

Although it is already functioning as an Aboriginal facility, Elbow Lake is only now beginning this program. It's a little premature to judge the overall results, but we definitely see results individually, case by case. There's no doubt that a number of situations have been satisfactorily resolved through this process. In some cases, it has had a significant, life-changing impact on the individual. Elbow Lake has had a fairly long history of spirituality and teaching cultural practices. Now we are working with the Chehalis Band, in particular, and the Sto:lo Nation, and we are developing a

number of other projects for incorporating traditional Aboriginal practice into correctional policies.

I would guess that from 20 to 25 per cent of our inmates are Aboriginal. The majority — 80 to 90 per cent — are on the Prairies, mainly Cree Indians. On the Prairies, I think that 60 to 70 per cent of the defendant population are Aboriginal. The national average is probably closer to B.C.'s average, and we're the second-highest at 20 to 25 per cent. Quebec has very few and the Maritimes virtually none, because the population is so small there.

Aboriginals represent a number of different backgrounds and traditions. It's a bit of a problem for us. On the West Coast, should we practice West Coast traditions or do we practice Prairie traditions? Most of our Elders come from the Prairies, so they tend to come from the Cree tradition. The sweat lodge is a Prairie institution, while the longhouse is West Coast. The daily practices and rituals are different, yet there are many general similarities; it's not as if they are wildly different. It's something we have to work with. We have to find what is common, a middle ground. I am absolutely convinced that once a Native offender gets on what they describe as the *red path* (which is on the way to spiritual healing through their culture), it's almost inevitably life-changing. Once they are committed to that course, it's rare that you see them turning back.

In Elbow Lake, we see evidence of the legacy of residential schools. The province's Residential Schools Project is dealing with some of the kids who came through that experience and are now adult criminals. We are involved with that project as well, and we have identified a number of kids who had bad experiences in residential schools, although some were good. I've talked to some Native people who say that it was not a negative experience for them. George Isbister, one of our Elders at Elbow Lake, told me that his own experience wasn't that bad, but for others it was, so it is a mixed bag. There are some clear cases of abuse that took place, and we see it worked out in subsequent criminal behaviour. It usually runs to violence and substance abuse.

There is clear evidence of fetal alcohol syndrome. I couldn't give you a percentage, but we've been looking at it. I know that staff in the reception centre are trying to see if they can start detecting

fetal alcohol syndrome among incoming offenders more quickly. The target population is not just Native, but all those who would be highly predisposed to the syndrome. It is a severe disorder and extremely difficult, because there is no known method of treatment.

Restorative justice and public understanding

By undertaking very specific projects and publicizing these initiatives, we can make the public more aware of restorative justice. I don't think they generally know that these initiatives are being tried. Or they think of restorative justice as little community-service projects. In a small way they probably are, but the full extent of restorative justice is not widely known. It has basically been the purview of the clergy and those with a political interest in restorative justice. If you ask most people in the street, they wouldn't have a clue what you are talking about.

It is going to need a good deal of communication. One of the ways we try at Ferndale is to hold an annual conference to educate people who we believe have influence in the community. We have to develop more initiatives and projects using the restorative justice model, and be able to demonstrate its effectiveness before people will start to realize that it is a more satisfactory approach. Some television documentaries have been produced to describe restorative justice. Across Canada, there are some very good spokespersons representing victims' groups, who are speaking on behalf of restorative justice initiatives. And we now have a number of victims who can speak on its behalf. Once a victim has gone through a satisfactory restorative justice initiative, he or she will often become a very good spokesperson. For instance, Wilma Derkson from Winnipeg works with the Mennonite Central Committee and other organizations on restorative justice. Her daughter was brutally raped and murdered 12 years ago. They never found the perpetrator. She has taken a very strong restorative justice position, and has gone across the country doing public speaking, interviews and presentations. She is a very articulate person — just one example of the people out there trying to explain and make this agenda more prominent.

Chapter six

Minimum Security and Ferndale Institution

In Canada, we have some models and concepts that I know are the best in the world in promoting public safety. Minimum security, for instance, is critical to the whole corrections process. When we ask people what it is we should be doing, and ways we should manage offenders, inevitably they describe things we can do at minimum-security facilities. I don't know if the number-one issue is reducing the cost to the taxpayer for incarceration, but it certainly comes up. Taxpayers do not want to spend a large chunk of their tax dollars on housing offenders.

The second important issue is making offenders take responsibility for themselves. It is clear to us in the corrections system that minimum security is the only place we can do that with any degree of success. We have the capacity there for people to do their own cooking and to look after themselves, rather than having us do a very expensive baby-sitting job.

Third, we can get the best of programming in minimum security. Because of the ambience and the physical structure we are able to deliver programs in a much more efficient and timely way than in most prisons. Work is a high priority for people. Minimum security affords us the opportunity to keep most of our offenders employed similarly to someone in the community — if not totally, at least we can start approximating what we expect of a person working. We can now expand that so that we can provide a variety of work, meeting a wide range of needs: diverse work opportunities, not just one industry. Historically, it has been proven that work is an absolutely crucial part of a good corrections program. Although work programs exist in medium-security and even maximum-security institutions, they cannot function as effectively as in

minimum-security facilities.

Another major feature is community service. We can do much local work for our communities. My guess is that across Canada, in our minimum-security institutions, we provide literally millions of dollars of community work and community service to the communities in which we are located. It is not widely recognized. We don't get a large amount of publicity, but every once in a while, a feature article comes out describing activities that we've been involved in and some of the excellent work that has gone into our various communities.

At Ferndale Institution a major part of our work has been serving the community. The most recent example is the construction of all the entry signs for the municipality of Mission. They are absolutely beautiful pieces of work, using heavy timbers, at a cost that the municipality could not afford on its own. It's a good example of the tremendous number of community-service work opportunities that go on. They are also a very important part of the corrections agenda.

The appearance of comfort

Despite the fact that these are all what people want in a good corrections system, when you actually deliver them you run into a lot of problems. The nature of how they get communicated, how we deal with them through the media, and how we deal with them politically have a lot do with it.

The major problems that we face include the appearance of comfort and what I would call the politics of escape. Inevitably, you are going to get criticism, especially in a place like Ferndale or other new facilities. People say they are far too attractive, considering the people we are accommodating. Some say it's an easy ride. *Readers' Digest* came out with a feature article on Ferndale, asking "Do our prisons have to be country clubs?" in the headline. The article focussed on the facts that the place was attractive, well-maintained and comfortable, and that it reflected a standard that many people in our society could not afford on their own. It was misleading, because the only difference between something being derelict and something being attractive is work. And the only reason that our

facilities are as attractive as they are is because we have a workforce that can produce and create an attractive place.

As a Warden, I always felt that it was part of my job to protect the assets of the country. They are owned by the people, and I thought it would be imprudent not to manage the facility with great care and to make sure that it was attractive and well-maintained. The criticism has always puzzled me. On the one hand, if we left it derelict I am sure there would be considerable concern and complaints from the public. On the other hand, the minute you spend time to make it attractive, to landscape it or make sure that buildings are well-maintained, painted and looked after, then you run into the opposite complaint.

I have to say that criticism does not come from the local people around the institutions. We try to keep in contact with them and meet with them as often as we can. In fact, their concerns are just the opposite: when they see a construction project on the site that they believe may detract from the place, they will call and show some concern. If I lived next door to one of these places, I would rather it look like a golf course than a jungle, and that's what they tell us. We get good support from our neighbours about the development of a well-cared-for facility.

The golf course that we built at Ferndale has become a focal point for criticism, if people need a target. It became a major feature for those who wanted to highlight the issue about attractiveness and comfort. At Ferndale, we do not have gymnasiums, so we chose to build a golf course because it was inexpensive. We wanted to create an activity that would be more social and that would reflect what goes on in the community. Over the years, we have created work opportunities that resulted in a number of men getting careers in golf-course maintenance and working in the landscape business. That was never intended as a clear plan, but it has turned out that way.

The thing I first introduced when I came to Ferndale was free access to the golf course for certain groups. That's the program we have with senior citizens, who currently have access to the facility three times a week. That will be expanded as a project nears completion — a little nine-hole, par 3. We may expand the hours, but

even now it gets incredible use. It has become a major part of the life of the seniors' community in Abbotsford and Mission.

It has had a number of good side effects. We don't charge them anything, but we do have volunteer donations that we make available to charities. In the past year, we have been able to support a number of charities from donations to the golf course.

Another secondary benefit concerns seniors who fear crime and the criminal justice system. Using the golf course gives them an opportunity to be up front and centre in seeing what really happens and who these inmates are. It gives them better knowledge of the criminal justice system than had not been exposed in this kind of way. It is interesting to see their change in attitude, once they start to know some of our offenders and become a little more aware of what we do, the expectations we place on people and the way we manage the facility. We never get any criticism from this group of folks. They are a great support group, as a matter of fact, and quite frankly, if the golf course was ever shut down, I wouldn't want to be the one dealing with them.

I wouldn't recommend that we should do this in every minimum-security facility. It happened to be appropriate in our context because we are in the horticultural business to a great degree. It was easy for us because of the very low cost of doing this kind of work. We have the equipment, and we grow the plants and shrubs that are necessary to make the place attractive. So the cost to us is minimal and the benefits are great.

Despite the criticism, I've made a point of not weaselling out. The easiest thing would be to back down and plough it under and turn it into a cabbage patch, I suppose. But I just don't think that's appropriate. As long as I have anything to say in the matter, it will remain an important part of who we are and of the community. We have support from the local golf and country clubs; they have no problem with us being there. If anything, they appreciate that we have introduced a number of people to golf, for as they get better, they will want to play at one of the bigger courses.

The other major criticism came when we began exploring the possibility of opening up a driving range. There was support from the people in Mission, but not a lot of support from one of the

driving-range operators in Abbotsford. He was concerned that it might cut into his business, and he launched a pretty aggressive campaign to stop any initiative. I don't know whether we would have actually gone ahead with the project eventually, but we did do a cost-benefit study to see if it was feasible. I thought we might be able to provide the driving range as a service to the community, and many local people were urging me at least to consider it. As a member of the Rotary Club, I talked to a number of business people who would take advantage of such a facility. A chunk of land that we had donated to the District of Mission a number of years ago for sports-related activities has never been developed. It is right behind the current municipal buildings, a very good location, but politics at present are such that it would not be appropriate even to consider it.

We have to take a few adventurous steps. My role as a Warden is to see what we can do in terms of public service, what is going to be accepted, and what is not. It all relates back to the politics of comfort. I noticed one political comment that inmates should not be playing golf: they should be doing cognitive skills programs. But it's not an either–or thing. They are doing cognitive skills programs. In fact, I have been one of the major proponents of that kind of programming over the years. It's just that those programs don't work unless inmates have had the opportunity to practice them in real-life situations.

We also have to create an opportunity for people to live the semblance of a normal life. All the programming in the world won't do any good. You can have them sit in classes on alcohol treatment for 12 hours a day, but to little effect because as human beings, that is not how we learn. We learn by practice. When we do programs, we try to link them to everything else that we do, from community service to work; we don't separate out one activity as more valuable than the next. We try to make sure that we do all of the things that are necessary to reconstruct and approximate normal life.

Appearances, however, are a real issue. We have to be bold and take a stand. We must say "No — we're not going to succumb to that kind of criticism because it's inappropriate and it undermines what we should be doing about reforming individuals."

The politics of escape

The other major issue that confronts us is escape. An escape inevitably means an inquiry, which means in turn that someone has to find something that went wrong. You find something that went wrong, and there are usually many little procedural changes that tend to work against doing what we should be doing. It has always been a question of what is tolerable in allowing for an escape. The cost of perfection is sometimes just too high. You can go down to zero escapes, and we are doing it successfully in our medium- and maximum-security facilities. But you sacrifice a tremendous amount in terms of reform and the large number of offenders that we can reach and change. We would miss that opportunity if we seek perfection.

We can probably do better than we have done in the past. We are doing quite well right now. When I came to Ferndale five years ago, there were something in the neighbourhood of 25 escapes a year, and that was tolerated. With the Timothy Cronin and Michael Roberts incident in 1994, we had a significant inquiry and took a hard look at what we could do to improve. We looked at some of our policies and procedures, and how we handled certain situations. We looked at the research, with targets and profiles of the kind of offender who escapes. There is good research: we know that the majority of escapees are young guys, often imprisoned for drug-related incidents such as drug debts or drug abuse that they can't handle. Frequently, they are young inmates serving short sentences, and they are usually caught within hours of escaping. With some fairly basic changes, we got the escape rate down to only two or three a year. In fact, there were a couple of years running when we had zero escapes, but I don't think you will ever get a perfect score, regardless of what you do.

High-profile escapes are the ones where an inmate gets out and commits a serious crime. They happen frequently enough to be a concern, but you don't shut everything down because of that. Of course, it's easy to say that we don't know what we are doing — we are allowing these guys to walk out helter-skelter. In truth, that is not the case. The majority of inmates don't run away. The huge

majority — 99.9 per cent — do not. When somebody does take off, you always step back and worry if he is going to be the person who commits the crime. Our experience at Ferndale is probably a little different from Elbow Lake. The majority of the offenders whom we've had escape have not had any subsequent charges for further criminal offences. Currently, two men who left are suspects in a murder, but no charges have been laid and as time goes on, it looks less and less likely that there will be.

If a person escapes from Ferndale, we would not take him back. There would be an involuntary transfer to a medium-security institution immediately. Whether they ever got back to a minimum-security facility would depend on a number of circumstances, but generally speaking they would not. Once they have betrayed that kind of trust, we take a pretty hard look. We've had a number of incidents where people have turned themselves back in, and even in those cases we do not keep them. We will transfer them. It's amazing how many times our own staff catch them. They see them downtown. They get information from other inmates. We're able to find them. Our success rate in recapture is about 100 per cent. There are not too many people out there whom we haven't recaptured, and usually it's within a very short time from when they leave.

There is strong pressure from the other inmates not to escape, because they understand the politics of escape. Escaping can create all kinds of public concern, and could cut them off from access to the good programs and activities available. It's an annoyance to the inmate population of minimum-security institutions — not a value that would be shared at some of our other levels of security. But certainly in minimum, there would be some hot drubbing from other inmates when people escape. It's not appreciated.

New value systems

Because we have slowly introduced value systems within the institution that are different from what offenders have been accustomed to, the con code doesn't hold anymore. It's gone. It will hold in some places, but once inmates get to a minimum-security institution and see the potential for freedom and for getting back into

the community and a real life, in their own self-interest, they come over more and more. The interest in maintaining the criminal profile diminishes — that's what we hoped for, and it seems to be happening. We've been monitoring our releases out of minimum-security facilities, and our best guess is that 90 per cent of people who come out — and I am being conservative here — actually complete their sentences without any further criminal behaviour. At least they have not been charged with criminal behaviour while out on parole or on any form of conditional release, so we know it works very effectively.

If you looked at some of these people, you would wonder whether we would have any success with them at all. It really seems that we do. Of all the federal inmates in the Pacific Region, we know that about 40 per cent will reoffend. Some years, it has been 60 per cent. At Ferndale, I would say that only about 10 per cent will reoffend, and we're dealing with tough cases. Half of those people are lifers. The criminal profile of our institution is not much different than what you would find in a medium-security institution in terms of the nature and type of crime the inmates have been involved in. The only difference is their attitude, and their willingness to do something about it. Petty thefts almost always get corrected by peer pressure. They seek to get into programs, and to develop a life, some self-confidence, relationships and community support.

These all are changes that need to happen if an offender is going to be released successfully. Somebody told me recently that at least a quarter of a million people across Canada have completed federal sentences, are in the community now and have never reoffended. There is a large group of people out there who seem to survive.

On the other hand, there are victims out there who have been horribly treated. There's no doubt about it: I don't think we treat victims very well. You have to do some follow-up. You see victims ten years later who are still upset. They're still mad, and I can understand why they're angry. We haven't prepared them for what will happen — that a person can be in jail for ten years and be changed profoundly. There is no point in having them locked up. The taxpayer is paying the bill for that. You need to prepare the

victims so they understand that we're not letting some offender get away with murder. We get criticism through bad public relations that the system doesn't work, but that is the nature of our work. I think it's working quite well.

Experiences at Ferndale Institution

The key is to create good opportunities and to manage the opportunities well. We operate programs through CORCAN, a company set up to deal with commercial projects. It has lost money in some industrial projects, but as long as I have been at Ferndale, it has been successful. It pays inmates about $2 a day and provides employment and training. We have been involved in a very successful horticultural program, mainly shrubs and ground cover, and now we are getting into perennials. It's a terrific program, thanks to the unique staff at Ferndale. What we have at Ferndale is a model of corrections. It is cost-effective, cheap and shows how we can work with people.

I have very experienced staff. All corrections officers are at the CO-2 level, and their knowledge and experience are ten times better than all the hardware in the world. Often, only three or four officers are on shift at any one time. We have cameras and other security technology, but it's just as important to know the inmates and know what the research says about who is dangerous and who isn't, and who is going to escape and who isn't. Two men escaped the day I was appointed to Ferndale. When I started my job, I learned of the escape of Cronin and Roberts in May 1994, and the community was very angry for obvious reasons. The effects of that are severe for everybody; it sets everything back. The other side of it, I've always believed, is to take those situations and use them to your advantage by looking for constructive alternatives.

We use Bob Hare, an expert in psychopathy who has done 30 years of research, to help us determine who you can trust and who you can't. There are people with no conscience. You have to treat them differently. No program in the world addresses them; it's manage and control only. The majority are not killers. They are manipulators, con men and fraud artists. They represent about 20 per cent

of our prison population; it would probably increase a bit in a medium-security institution, and when you get up to a maximum-security institution like Kent, it's about 30 to 40 per cent.

Ferndale's inmate population is now 140, soon to rise to 170. The housing units are fabulous: the best thing that ever happened. They were cheap to construct, because the inmates built them themselves, and inexpensive to maintain, because the inmates have to care for the units themselves. They do their own cooking, laundry and cleaning, and they grow their own gardens. We have eight-man units with no double bunking, although some of the housing units have shared accommodation with two men to a room.

Homosexuality does not seem to be a problem under this model. It goes on, but it's not much tolerated any more. If someone is observed being aggressive, the inmates tell us right away. That's what happens when you break things up into small little groups. You don't have that big old prison mentality, with a con code. It's completely different here.

Contraband is not a major issue because we work with a different system than in most places. We use intensive supervision. We have a check list of behaviours to watch for. We monitor sleep patterns and who people associate with. If we are suspicious, we tell an inmate that he is being monitored every step he takes and every breath he takes. He'll spill the beans right there, 90 per cent of the time. It's uncomfortable for them to be closely watched. We tell them that we will work with them if they have any problems, and they usually confess. If they don't, they're out of Ferndale.

One of the things that allowed me to accomplish all this was public exposure and the involvement of many communities and organizations to find how we could do things better. We had broad access to the community, but it took a while. Now, I have terrific support from the local community. We have worked very closely with the community in a number of projects worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. I changed the logo of the institution to *Partners in Corrections*, and had T-shirts and golf shirts made so that we can give them away in the community. We've had a huge number of partnerships over the last four years.

I received a note just the other day from the Mayor of Mission,

Randy Hawes. We became pretty close friends. The note said: "There are really no words to express my sorrow about your illness. I'm thinking back when you first took over at Ferndale and you and I had a pretty rocky start. You should know though that since then I have developed an immense respect for you, not only for your work as Warden but for you as a man. You have a profound impact on how I view corrections, and that, Ron, is a tribute to you as a person."

Chapter seven

Three Prisons Viruses: Disrespect, Idleness and Detachment

Three viruses always infect corrections. We should pay attention to them, because they are always going to be there. No matter what area you move into, they have an impact.

Disrespect

The first of these is disrespect. I mean disrespect in its broadest definition: not only how we treat offenders, but also how we treat each other as employees, and how the organization treats its members who are carrying out the jobs. It means how we treat the public, in terms of accountability to the public, and how we treat victims who suffer the pain and consequences of crime.

We have had varying degrees of success in dealing with disrespect, which often had to do with poor behaviour and poor treatment of offenders, and poor treatment of fellow employees. I can remember my early days in corrections, walking through places like the B.C. Penitentiary and observing what I thought was rather disrespectful behaviour among officers toward each other. It was really quite disturbing. It was not a model I would hold up as one of excellence. They all survived somehow; you work out a system because you all have to survive, but it was not what we would consider by any standards a respectful environment in which to work.

We weren't terribly aware or concerned about human rights issues — not nearly as much as we are now. I can remember debates about the subject, especially in my early years in corrections. The concern was that inmates would eventually get away with murder, everything would be inmate rights-oriented, and everybody else would be forgotten. It had to do with general respect, which has

always been difficult. Although we don't see the same levels of disrespect now that we did previously, because of policies on harassment and better organizational structures, we still see vestiges of it in our staff relations and conflict in the union–management area. There are some good examples of labour–management relations, which I think are improving. Along with human rights goes respect for the rule of law. We have to be much more diligent in the professional ways that we account for what we do. Underneath it all, if we are not careful and prudent, callousness in letting the dark side of disrespect overtake us can surface very quickly.

The area that is more troubling to me now is the disrespect that I see coming from some political positions being taken. Certainly, the demand for harsher and crueler treatment suggests we're moving back to an era of disrespect. I'm greatly concerned that the media generally have taken a fairly dramatic shift from their stance in the 1970s. Then, they were very critical of us for our abusive behaviour. Now, they are extremely critical of leniency in the organization. Some of it is misdirected, because our priority is to change human behaviour, which is probably the most difficult task that anybody could tackle. To do it in the context of perpetual punishment and brutality simply doesn't work.

You want to make sure that there is a balance to things. When I say we treat people respectfully, it doesn't mean that we ignore their criminal behaviour, or treat them as though nothing happened or that what they did was somehow an honourable thing. That's not what we're talking about — it's quite the opposite. Treating people respectfully is holding them to account for what they did and the troubles they caused, trying to bring some redress to those who suffered the consequences of their behaviour, and at the same time, changing their behaviour. That is what I would define as a respectful way of conducting our business.

Politics drives how things eventually evolve — the whole future of public policy. I find it somewhat troubling because in some ways it seems like a move back toward a meaner and more brutal society. We've forgotten how demeaning it is and what an impact it has on the general public. We have a society that allows us to treat other human beings poorly, for whatever reason. Some

politicians say that we don't concern ourselves with public safety issues, but that is what we are all about. The safest thing we can do is to change people's behaviour patterns. There are classes of offenders, and some of them are outrageous criminals. The best we can do is contain them.

Canada has come a long way in actually directing an offender's behaviour. From some of the research we are involved in, I am absolutely convinced that we can be extremely effective — not 100 per cent, but we have had a major impact on our recidivism rate. We have a more sophisticated organization and higher technology, and we can now monitor those things that have been difficult to measure. On the other hand, while we can help offenders change their own behaviour extensively, it's always a matter of degree. For certain individuals, a dramatic change would be that they could be contained in a medium-security institution for the rest of their lives. Whether they would be safe to go anywhere near the community is a separate question. Nevertheless, we can in fact help the majority of our offenders become law-abiding citizens. It strikes me from the evidence I have seen in the last five years at Ferndale Institution that the possibilities are fairly dramatic.

We are able to help people reduce their criminal activity in significant ways. Just the other day, I received a postcard from a fellow who was my first parolee in 1973, and who is currently living in the community. He's an older gentleman now, of course. He was one of literally thousands of people with whom I have had contact over the years, who have dissolved into the general community at large and are normal citizens. These people are never going to be the subject of media attention because they have quit committing other offences and they don't stick out like a sore thumb. I know that the media's job is to report the exception; these people are not the exception, and they don't become so obvious.

I believe we could reduce the prison population in Canada substantially, probably reducing the risk to society. There is a discernable shift throughout the system. From my own experience in minimum security, the obvious expectation is that corrections should have a much higher success rate. Generally speaking, we have made a dramatic improvement right across the board in the number of

inmates who are likely to reoffend. We estimate that 70 per cent of our entire current population would not reoffend after release — our national average. In a previous era, if we had 40 per cent, we would be lucky.

You are going to have fewer released from maximum-security institutions because they are lifers and more dangerous, but if you take the whole group of people who are sitting in prison today and looked at them 10 years from now, after some kind of release, our best guess is that about 70 per cent would become law-abiding citizens, or at least won't reoffend.

I haven't had a good look at what other jurisdictions do. In many cases, they just don't keep that kind of data. It's hard to make comparisons because we define crime differently. The best comparisons are with western European countries, yet their criminal codes and what they define as crime are quite different in many places. For example, they may handle sex offences under their equivalent of the *Mental Health Act*, as opposed to the Criminal Code. The United States has a fragmented correctional system because every state has its own — 50 different correctional systems. The American federal prison system is relatively small, dealing only with federal offences such as cross-border crime or offences specifically against the federal government. If you defraud your social-security cheque, you'll land up as a federal inmate, but if you kill your wife, you will land up in the state system. In the United States, the state system is much closer to our federal system.

Idleness

One of the killers of corrections is idleness. It has to do with how we have organized prisons over the past 200 years. The architecture and security systems that we have in place do not allow an effective use of time. Too much of an offender's time is spent sitting around and doing nothing. Very few offenders in North America actually do a meaningful day of work. Chain gangs are still operating in the southern United States. I don't mean sending a road gang out with a brushcutter and clearing the side of the road. It's physically active but it's not the kind of productive work that ultimately

has much merit, replicating what a person is expected to do in society.

It's the curse of all wardens: to organize their institutions in a way that they can keep people productively occupied. You are restricted by time and space. There are only so many things you can do. Innovative work programs — such as our industrial programs — are very difficult to run. On the one hand, you have to be careful not to be viewed as having slave labour and not to compete with private-sector businesses, and on the other hand, you must have business practices that are appropriate and workable. So it is a terrific challenge to defeat idleness. One of the advantages of minimum-security facilities is that we are able to structure and organize ourselves in a way that we can occupy peoples' time much more productively. In medium- and maximum-security institutions, however, making productive use of offenders' time is amazingly difficult. And I mean all aspects of time, including productive leisure time. There are only so many things that you can let people do. So what happens? Guys sit down in the weight room pumping iron, and it becomes your major leisure activity. That's not my idea of good socialization among people. It's not constructive, people just hanging around with each other engaged in non-productive discussion about future criminal behaviour. It's a very difficult challenge to get around.

Employment, to me, is absolutely crucial. I believe in programming, and I have been an advocate of good programming for many years. But programming only has value if it is related to real-life experience. Unless someone involved in a training, learning or rehabilitation program actually practices what he learns, then it's of no merit. You can go to a school of journalism all your life, but if you never write an essay, you're not going to learn anything. That's very true in corrections. If people aren't living as we expect normal human beings to live — to do their cooking, to look after themselves, to work productively at a job where they are accountable for what they do, or get fired if they don't do a good job — all the programming you do for that individual is of marginal value. It's not one or the other. Some of my corrections critics, such as politicians, will say that inmates shouldn't be doing these kinds of projects — they should be doing programs to deal with their substance abuse.

Yet you can only spend so many hours a day dealing with substance abuse. You've actually got to do something with the remainder of the time that replicates normal living. For me and particularly for my colleagues at a minimum-security institution, it's hugely important; all of us do whatever we can to create work opportunities.

If work is meaningful and productive, I never have trouble finding people to do it, even dirty work. Some of the jobs are not particularly good jobs. It is industrial work that includes park construction and trail building. In British Columbia, in the middle of winter, this is not the most pleasant experience because you labour in the cold and rain and muck under very adverse weather conditions. It's difficult work, chasing down the highway for days on end, cleaning the medians on the freeway, clearing brush and controlling ragweed. Most of us wouldn't choose to do that as an occupation, but I've never had problems finding people to do it because it's productive work. They happily do it because they know that at the end of the day they will have produced something of value and merit. But if I ask people to break rocks for the sake of breaking rocks I'm not going to have too many takers. Some will even happily shovel manure because we have a herd of cattle coming. As an old farm boy, for the last five years, I thought this was something we could do successfully, so it's a dream come true for me.

The other side of meaningful work is having diverse work opportunities. People assume that everybody does the same thing, and that's not true. One of the models I try to adopt is to have a variety of work options to maximize inmates' gifts and skills. Whether they are mechanical or administrative, there are work opportunities that exist in all those areas. A number of people who wind up in prison for whatever reason are gifted — artists, for example. We allow them to work their craft for commercial and other purposes as community-service initiatives. We run construction crews who do all kinds of work in the community for volunteer organizations.

Detachment

By "detachment" I mean the habit of organizations — particularly corrections — to become too internalized, secretive and private,

not wanting the public or others to know what goes on. Historically, it was a very secret society. Very few people in Canada had a clue about what went on behind the walls of B.C. Penitentiary, and even today have very little understanding of what really goes on inside our correctional facilities. Although this has changed with the advent of citizens' advisory committees, and more access generally to the media, public organizations and groups, the habit still lurks underneath of wanting to be a very private organization, of saying that we'll do our own thing and nobody can tell us what to do.

It has been a challenge for us to work hard at being open and accountable. The trouble is that we have been secretive for so long that when we make efforts to be open and accountable, it is often viewed as manipulative: somehow the straight goods aren't coming across — we're an organization full of conspiracies. Conspiracies, of course, take more ability and intelligence than we've ever been able to muster. Nonetheless, the view persists among administrators and correctional workers that what we do is nobody else's business. We tend to wonder why others should be concerned with how we handle ourselves.

In most cases, offenders will be going back to their families and their connections in the community, so to divorce them from the community is not a good thing. Anything we can do that reinforces community connections is important, as much as it is very difficult to maintain. There are so many publics with vested interests, often in conflict with each other. One group does not necessarily concur with what another organization believes to be true, and you're often caught in the middle of trying to mediate between competing values and competing interests.

We suffer from nimbyism — not in my backyard — in an extreme form in our business. To try to open a halfway house or some kind of community-based resource anywhere, even in industrial areas, becomes an almost impossible task. The community simply does not want to have any sense of responsibility for dealing with criminal behaviour. It just hopes that somebody else will take it and bury it and make sure that nobody has to deal with it, but that's not how it is. We're dealing with human beings who still have stakes in the community, and eventually will have to be part

of that community. Even in our practice of community corrections, it's a very difficult job to get good support and co-operation from community groups.

Detachment is one of the more difficult viruses that keeps coming up and attacking what we do because, ultimately, we're only effective if we establish a good base of community support in everything from programming to providing employment. One of the ways we try to deal with it in a place like Ferndale is to establish a number of partnerships with various groups and organizations. Our motto — Partners in Corrections — continually reinforces the idea that what we do has some community impact. The more we get involved with projects and initiatives, and obtain advice from the community, the more knowledgeable it becomes about what our role and responsibilities are. The community can also give us good advice and direction about how we can do our job better.

As an old Warden in this business, I find that the three viruses of disrespect, idleness and detachment are the issues that always haunt what we do. I think it's probably the same for my colleagues. We struggle all the time to try to avoid the obvious ridicule and negative view that people have of corrections, and to try to help them understand that what we do is crucial to the overall health of our society.

I have often thought that Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* should be required reading for everyone in society — a classic novel that really explores the nature of punishment in society, and how we deal with crime and its impact generally on society. Some of the old classics have a lot to teach us. I think I am fortunate that my education has been extremely eclectic: everything from English literature to anthropology to philosophy to theology. Having an eclectic academic experience has given me a somewhat broader view of who we are and what we do, not just a totally focussed view of our profession as unique and special. Corrections is broad, and we have to develop a good understanding of where we sit in the overall scheme of Canadian society. Most of my colleagues and I are all from similar backgrounds, and we all want to make a contribution to the quality of life in Canada. We're not here to torment innocent people. This need not to be detached but rather to be very attached

to what goes on is critically important for us, and should guide us in many of our public policies in the future.

Chapter eight

The Strengths of Canadian Corrections

The corrections agenda in the United States

When we look at what is happening in other places, the experience in the United States is one that we as Canadians should fight strongly to avoid. Two good articles discuss the seriousness of the problem. One is Eric Schlosser's "The Prison–Industrial Complex" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December 1998, with a good overview of how the security industry is driving the corrections agenda in the United States. The costs involved are prohibitive, and are putting a stranglehold on many of the states. The other is Loïc Wacquant's "L'emprisonnement des 'classes dangereuses' aux États-Unis" in the July 1998 issue of *Le Monde diplomatique*, a French publication, about who winds up in prison. The American system is hugely discriminatory, particularly to ethnic communities, Blacks and Hispanics. Young men are spending more and more time in prison. The problem with that, of course, is that they are bringing the prison culture and a criminal lifestyle back to their own communities. When people are pulled out of society for any length of time, it disrupts family life and is intertwined with the huge drug problem.

In the United States, prisons are becoming the new Viet Nam. As the two articles have noted, prisons and security in the U.S. are becoming the new military–industrial complex. Money is being dumped into prison construction and other security systems. It's a megabillion-dollar business, and it's a runaway train — totally out of control. I am on the Board of Directors of the Western Corrections Association, and I have a fair amount of contact with my U.S. colleagues. In places like California, which at one time had an excellent correctional system, the costs of the new system are

draining the state's budget. California is now spending more on the operation of prisons than on education. There's really something wrong with that picture. The future is not particularly good for the public, based on the three-strikes-and-you-are-out policy of the American criminal justice system. The crime rate is extremely high when you do this, the costs escalate and the public is not protected. I would hate to see us as Canadians get involved in a similar situation.

The Canadian crossroads

In Canada, we have largely avoided that so far, for two reasons. First, we have the legislative mandate to do the job right. We are fortunate in that the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* under which we operate is very progressive. It allows for the operation of a corrections system that is more focussed on reducing and dealing with crime through rehabilitation and other kinds of initiatives than our counterparts are. The Act is a comparative benefit, but the public is not familiar with it and confuses our system with the American system. They interpret a lot of what happens in Canada in an American context. That's a media-related issue.

Second, there is both the increasing demand for punishment, as opposed to anything else, and more concern for the victims. We have done a poor job with victims. How do we satisfy victims so that they feel that the system is addressing their concerns, while we, at the same time, address the criminal behaviour of offenders through good and progressive programming? It's a real dilemma for us right now. The concern I have is that in our efforts to find an acceptable way of dealing with victims and other public groups that are demanding more satisfactory punishment, we will abandon the current course that we have been on for the past 30 years. The program has been directed toward trying to address and work with the criminal to reduce his level of risk in a way that will promote public safety. We are at a crossroads now. It is clear that we must figure out much better ways of communication with the public, so that it can have a better understanding.

In some cases, you will never satisfy everybody. After the recent

execution of a Canadian in Texas, the family of the criminal's victim was interviewed and asked if it was satisfied with what had taken place, now that the man had been put do death. The family's response; no, it wasn't good enough. He died an easy death through lethal injection, whereas the family member died a very brutal and violent death. It really hadn't been fair. At some point you wonder how you will satisfy everybody in making sure that there is proper compensation. This is one of the things we need to address, and my major concern in talking about corrections is that we somehow figure out a way to continue to do the right thing.

It takes great political courage by Canada's Solicitor General to defend what we do. It's a job he will come to hate, because there will be criticism in the House of Commons when incidents happen. He always has to stand up there and defend the situation; I can appreciate the fact that it's not the happiest thing he or she would like to do, but it goes with the territory. In fact, a number of our Solicitors General have had the courage to take the right position to try to defend the system, while at the same time correcting things that have gone wrong. I am not suggesting that they cover up, or that we should ignore failure. The courageous part is that we don't change our legislation or our procedures willy-nilly just because of a particular incident. It's a great temptation to shut things down and order this or that stopped. It should only be done if such is the most appropriate and prudent way to solve the issue. Shutting down activities is not always the most prudent thing to do.

It's a serious political issue, and as a senior bureaucrat, I know that our job is to protect the Minister from that kind of criticism. Most of us take it seriously. I know personally that I have contributed to a number of situations where the Minister has had to defend our activity in the House. Generally speaking, I've been defended well. But we are at a time in our history when the politics of meanness and retribution are always going to be on the attack because it serves political interests. It is difficult to maintain a good defensive posture while doing what's right, and not always to be led entirely by inquiry and public opinion. It's a fragile thing. It can change very quickly one way or the other; if we

start creating a policy based on public opinion on any particular day, we could find ourselves in trouble.

That has been the magic of our *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. It has served us very effectively over a long period of time, and it still holds today just as much as it did when it was first put together. With a few amendments over the years, it still serves us well as Canadians. I think it's a model for the world. The world looks to us and sees the good things that we do. Canadians typically look at themselves and say, "Aren't we the cesspool of the world?" I've never understood why we are so self-deprecating all the time. I guess it's part of the nature of being Canadian.

International comparisons

I don't think we have anything to be ashamed of internationally when it comes to how we handle and manage prisoners. I have met and hosted a number of official groups from countries all over the world, including the Chief Justice of the People's Republic of China, and similar groups from Israel, Thailand, Hong Kong and several European countries. Their comments are inevitably that "you people are so fortunate: you have a very, very good set of laws and policies, and you've got a good management structure. You have all the things that we envy and would like to replicate." Yet as Canadians, we sit back and pound on ourselves, wanting something better.

We're certainly more cost effective — not per capita, but overall — because we don't incarcerate as many as some other countries do. Our total costs for incarceration are low. Our cost per offender is relatively high, because if you spend the money on a per-case basis and you are successful, you reduce the long-term costs and prison growth. We have been able to avoid the tremendous prison growth of the United States, which is costly and which isn't stopping crime at all. I think the United States is looking at other options, but what they are doing now is prohibitively costly. We can't afford it. To replicate it would bankrupt us. And it would be bad, anyway, because our crime rates would probably go up and we wouldn't have succeeded in anything. In the U.S., we know that offenders are

bringing criminal values back into the community, rather than the other way round. We deliberately chose to avoid that situation.

European countries have similar costs to ours. Some are encountering problems that were well-managed for years, but are suddenly facing difficulty because of immigration issues. Countries like the Netherlands — which always prided itself on having the most cost-effective and liberal corrections system in the world — is now having some difficulties because of the huge number of immigrants who have come into the country in the past few years. Now, they are facing all of the problems arising from multiculturalism, poverty and other issues to which Canadians have had some exposure over the years.

In Canada, we have a number of Asian illegal aliens in prison. I doubt whether they are over-represented in the prison population; per capita, they are fairly consistent with what any other ethnic group would represent. In Western Canada, that may not entirely be true because of a high Asian population and some of the criminal activity they control. I doubt that 25 per cent of our prison population are Asian, but they are over-represented in drug trafficking. Yet it's not just Asians; it's people from South and Central America as well. There are pockets of offenders that come and go, like the Hondurans, but it could be somebody else the next day. They are not big-time organizations, but rather whoever is convenient and can be recruited into crime.

Canadian programming and research

My personal interests have always centred on working with good programming. In Canada, all our programming is cognitive-based. Our treatment initiatives are consistently linked together, and based on the same principles, philosophy and science. They are designed to correct criminal thinking and to readjust criminal thinking errors. For example, our treatments for sex offenders, for sexual abuse and for violent offenders are all based on cognitive — that is, thinking — skills. This is a major advantage for Canadian corrections. It is not just a bunch of wing-nut programs, or the flavour of the month, or something that simply sounds like a good

thing to do.

We look much more at the science of what works and what doesn't work. Canada is far ahead of the pack in its research — another of our advantages. When we developed the cognitive-based approach, it relied on research defining successes and failures over the past years: readjusting criminal thinking and improving moral reasoning. It became the foundation for all our programming.

We can even make the argument that our Aboriginal programming is cognitive-based because it has to do with moral reasoning and thinking within a particular culture or value system. Nevertheless, it is still based on good thinking, consistently applied across Canada. I know that someone is delivering a cognitive skills program to an offender in Nova Scotia, and when I get the offender here, I know basically what he has been through. I can have confidence that the program has been carried out consistently, another clear advantage of our Correctional Service. The fact that our coaches are trained similarly from one end of the country to the other helps in our evaluating an assessment of an offender's potential risk in the future.

A further issue is consistency in our risk-assessment tools. There will always be differences in human skills, but the instruments and tests are the same. Our risk-assessment centres are based on these principles. At Ferndale Institution, I think that we are a bit ahead of other institutions in implementing some techniques, but we all use the same technology.

One final area I believe in strongly. We should not be building any more large prisons in Canada. If we do anything more, we should expand our minimum-security capacity. We are not anywhere near holding the number of inmates that we could probably deal with. Yet we must not allow minimum-security institutions to get too big, because that defeats their purpose. Right now, Ferndale has 140 offenders, and with four more houses at eight inmates per house, potentially the population could go to 172. I would say that's the limit. At Elbow Lake we shrunk the population when we decided to take mainly Aboriginal offenders. It now has about 70 offenders, although the capacity is 100. There are a very few non-Natives, but they are there because they chose to participate in that kind of

programming, and their numbers are diminishing.

In the Pacific Region, our population in medium-security facilities — Matsqui, Mission and Mountain — has dropped quite dramatically, and we will soon have excess beds available. We are not overcrowded at all. The reason is straightforward. We are paying more attention to getting people ready for release on time and moving into minimum security. We are moving in the right direction, but we can do better than that. If we moved our people in minimum security a little more quickly, the average stay — except for the long-term lifers — would probably be three or four months. Although our capacity is 140 inmates, in one year we may well process in the neighbourhood of 300 to 400 inmates. If you compare the incident and escape rates with the total number of inmates we actually work with, it's very minimal. We usually get publicity over escapes, but the last escape didn't even make it to the local newspaper.

It is going to take some courage to continue on track with the minimum-security agenda. Yet we have to keep pushing it, because that is what is going to keep Canada safer. We have demonstrated that it can happen. We have the right people, the right training, and the right programming. We have the capacity for community service, and the capacity to be very well managed. The pieces are all in place to do it.

Chapter nine

Last Words: Do the Right Thing

Ferndale has been a place of excellence, and I include Elbow Lake because it is turning into a place of excellence in Aboriginal programming. Elbow Lake is going into a redevelopment phase very shortly; it will be rebuilt along an Aboriginal design. It's exciting, and I would have liked to have been part of that. Dianne Brown is taking over for me. I met her, and I think she is the right person: she has the right values, management skill and very good people skills. She is looking forward to coming there. I told her it's probably the best job in Canadian corrections. It was the best job I ever had, and it is sad for me to have to walk away from it, but you've got to let it go. I only hope that we will not lose a number of the gains we have made over the years, doing this kind of work and doing it well.

In summing up my career, I feel satisfaction in the number of successes and my ability to change the correctional agenda — not just at the Ferndale site but across Canada. I have had the opportunity to demonstrate what works and what doesn't work. I took a bit of risk in actually implementing things that I believed would make the criminal justice system better, and the satisfaction of seeing a number of these things in fact work.

I was able to offer some leadership in areas such as restorative justice and several policies and procedures for managing our facilities.

To have had some influence is the greatest satisfaction, and to be recognized for it is even better. That has happened more than I have probably warranted. I have had tremendous support and recognition from my colleagues. That they showed willingness to create awards and honours in my name to reflect excellence in corrections tells me that I worked in an organization that accepts and recognizes

people who showed initiative, even if I put them at risk on occasion and embarrassed them the odd time. But they had the courage to stand up and say "No," and to do the right thing.

I keep telling my staff this: We'll do the right thing, not just do what is right. If you simply do things right, you can get misled by detail and trivia that doesn't have any value or impact. We need to focus on asking "What is the right thing?" in the course of our decision-making. And that is the principle that has guided me, the principle by which I have always tried to operate, and it has served us well. I am still convinced that the corrections system, if it maintains the same course, will continue to be successful.

Postface

Two weeks after he recorded these final observations, Ron Wiebe died on July 28, 1999. At the memorial service for Ron on August 2, Commissioner Ole Ingstrup spoke for the whole Correctional Service when he said, "Ron Wiebe had the moral and professional capacity to lead. His passing is an enormous loss."

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"We're dealing with the worst-case scenarios, the hardest cases our society has produced, but nevertheless true intervention and true corrections can happen within the context of community participation and involvement."

"When people (offenders) can actually express remorse and sorrow for what they did, and more importantly, if they can do it to the affronted, we know that it is often a life-changing experience."

"Once a victim has gone through a satisfactory restorative justice initiative, he or she will often become a very good spokesperson."

"When we look at what is happening in other places, the experience in the United States is one that we as Canadians should fight strongly to avoid."

"It is going to take some courage to continue on track with the minimum-security agenda. Yet we have to keep pushing it, because that is what is going to keep Canada safer."

– Ron Wiebe